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ABSTRACT

The articles in this issue include "Let's Talk about What This Means" (Duncan); "Dyslexia and Adult Literacy--Forging the Missing Link" (Kidder); "Competency-Based ESL, One Step Forward or Two Steps Back?" (Auerbach); " A Comparative Look at Adult Literacy Programs in Stockholm, London, and Boston" (Nickse); "The Education Part of Basic Education" (Hikes); "'MUD': A Theatrical Review" (Kingsbury); "Working with Students on the G.E.D." (Reuys); "Pronunciation through Minimal Sets and the Silent Way" (Ryan, Croes); "A Structured Approach to Active Observing: Insights into Teaching and Learning" (Sauerhaft); and "Writing Projects and Literacy: Report on an Experiment" (Burden, Check, Golden). (CML)

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CONNECTIONS

A JOURNAL OF ADULT LITERACY

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volume II

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Introduction

David Vitale, Ed.M. and David J. Rosen, Ed.D.

Connections is intended to provide an opportunity for Boston area adult educators to communicate with colleagues, both locally and nationwide, and draws primarily on local practitioners as contributors.

In this edition, articles were selected to reflect the diversity of conceptual frameworks, approaches and activities taking place in adult basic education, to be of practical use in the field, and to be interesting and readable.

Over 800 copies of the first volume of *Connections* have been distributed to local, state and national adult literacy programs and organizations. The response has been overwhelmingly favorable and very encouraging. Many of these comments have pointed to the importance of sharing models and approaches that have been shown effective in educating adults. The editorial staff has carefully considered those comments and suggestions in selecting articles for the journal's second edition.

Adult basic skills practitioners need a forum to express their ideas and concerns, and to describe their students, their programs and their own accomplishments, and we are eager to continue to provide this opportunity.

The Resource Institute does not endorse or advocate any single approach, philosophy, or opinion presented in this edition. We do feel that these articles are representative of our mission to encourage communication and resource-sharing among adult basic educators.

We welcome your reactions to the journal or to any of the articles in it. We would be pleased to print letters in response to the ideas expressed here, and encourage articles which present differing points of view. Letters or articles should be submitted to the Editorial Board at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute, and might be published in the journal or in the Resource Institute's bi-monthly newsletter.

Unless otherwise stated, articles are not copyrighted; however, permission must be obtained from the *Connections* editorial staff and the author before reprinting an article in another publication or for widespread distribution.

We would like to thank the following people for their efforts and contribution to the publication of the second edition of *Connections*.

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CONNECTIONS

A Journal of Adult Literacy

Connections is a publication of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute, located at Roxbury Community College, 625 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115. Our phone numbers are 232-4695 and 734-1960 ext. 212. The Resource Institute is jointly sponsored by the University of Massachusetts at Boston and Roxbury Community College and is partially funded by the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services.

The Adult Literacy Resource Institute provides training, technical assistance, and other resources to Boston area adult basic education programs and advocates for the needs of those programs and their students. The Resource Institute also publishes, in addition to this journal, an adult literacy newsletter. The Resource Institute is part of the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative, which was created in 1983 by the city to raise the basic, life, and English language skills of Boston adults, enabling them to continue their education or complete training programs, and obtain or advance in employment.

The Resource Institute promotes educational models and practices that can be used to students' best advantage in the cultural, ethnic, racial and class diversity of an urban setting. Reflecting the intent of Boston's Adult Literacy Initiative, it also promotes competency-based and other approaches and models which can be used effectively in community-based learning centers.

ADULT LITERACY RESOURCE INSTITUTE

Sponsored by the City of Boston's Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services
in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts / Boston and Roxbury Community College

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Let's Talk About What This Means

by Marty Duncan

Introduction: *Every teacher and every student has a stock of tales to tell. In two years of teaching, I have seen and heard enough to fill several books with stories. When I thought of writing a story about our class, I considered weaving together several anecdotes to present the "highlights." As it turned out, one night "everything" happened and it seemed that this story would tell the true story (from my point of view) most completely.*

I wrote the story, revised it and then read it to the students in the class. I asked their permission to submit it for publication. They not only gave their permission but asked that their real names be used.

Shifting my books and portable file, I push the orange door that opens into the area known as "the alcove," a partially enclosed space off the bridge that connects two buildings, the only indoor route between them. Large windows line two walls. Glancing down from one of them I notice the ducks in the backyard of the neighboring house I smile, as usual, at the odd appearance they make there. The other two walls are covered with bulletin boards. It is March, so many construction paper lions and lambs cavort across them. Kindergarten-size tables and chairs are pushed to one side to make way for adult-size chair-desks.

Tony and Henry are more than half an hour early as usual. Tony's wrist is healing, so he's back to setting up and washing the blackboard. Accustomed to physical work, he does this with ease, turning to smile and say that the doctor says exercise is good for the wrist. Henry looks up from under his blue baseball cap and bids me good evening. From his wheelchair he is setting up desks for the other students.

Tony, Henry — what do they need first? It's early so I may be able to get started with them before the others get here. Tony's been struggling with reading. I want to see how he's doing with syllables. I have to talk to Henry about his letter. He wrote me a letter, at my request, about his objections to a reading we did in class. I've written a response, but I want to talk to him, too.

The room is hot from the setting sun glaring through the windows that do not open. Bob has complained about that recently. We may have to write another petition to get a better space to hold class. It was Joe who wrote the last one. Everybody misses Joe.

I can't tell whether I'm hot from the sun or the possible fever that started earlier in the day. A lot of flu going around, but I don't want to be sick. I look forward to this class — just thinking about it makes me feel energetic. Even if this is the flu, I can make it for three hours. I don't have time to dwell on it because I have a class plan that involves a tutor and the tutor is sick. Zona would have loved to take the tutor's place, but she couldn't get a babysitter tonight. Still I want to explore that possibility. She's a former student and she'd be great with the class.

The first hour is individual time and I know that each student will bring work to do. I also have a syllabication exercise for them to work on. It's the number table exercise I planned for the second hour that worries me. It would work better with 2 groups, but how effective will I be running back and forth between them? Okay, it's six. I have a watch now and I want to start on time. I've never worn a watch in my life and I refuse to be ruled by it now, but working in this class has shown me the importance of time and structure. The more solid the plan, the

easier it is to explain, change, extend or dispense with it when necessary.

Two people are here. I like this arrangement. Everyone will be here by 6:45, so by 7:00 we can do group work. The only problem is that those who come later don't get much one-to-one attention. But what can they do? They work. They have families.

"Thanks, Tony." The board looks as good as it ever will. It gets a lot of rough use from several groups besides ours.

"Here ya go. Look what I got!" Tony says, pulling out a dictionary-size yellow box. Two dozen chocolate marshmallow candy bars. He hands me four of them. I feel green.

"Thanks a lot, but I think I'm getting the flu. I'll save these. So how are the syllables going?"

Tony pulls out his blue book. Inwardly, I wonder what strange idea motivated me to use a curriculum called *Women and Work* with a class that is two-thirds men. But no one has complained so far and we've had some lively arguments about women's work and men's work.

"Res-tau-rant."
"How many syllables?"
"Three."
"Wait-ress."
"Yeah?"
"Two."

I see that Tony is really getting this.

"Have you been practicing?"
"Eddie helped me."

'Eddie helped me,' I used to worry, meant 'Eddie did it' or 'Eddie gave me the answers.' But Tony has shown me the way he works on his own and I have encouraged him to have Eddie, his nephew, help him with directions. He breaks into syllables each of the six words without making a mistake.

"Great, Tony! That's really great!" He beams and unwraps a candy bar. I leave the new syllabication exercise with him and glance over at Henry, who is working math problems. I pull out his letter and my response. Henry has, in fact, complained about the reading material, but not because it's called *Women and Work*. After reading one of the passages, he told me that he refused to read further. I understood, from our brief conversation, that his objection had something to do with references to slavery. I asked him to write me a letter explaining what was bothering him.

Henry nods several times while he reads my answer. He says "Right on," softly,the way he says it when he's pretty serious about the matter at hand.

"I agree with you," he says, looking up.

"Good," "But I'm not sure I understand exactly what it was in the reading that bothered you."

I recall the passage written by a student in another Adult Ed. Program, who referred to her mother as Puerto Rican Black. She writes that her father is white and that his family treats her mother badly. And she mentions slavery...

"To tell you the truth," Henry says, "I didn't like some of the comments people in this class made when we read that story."

"Oh!" I'm reminded that there was tension, confusion, even laughter, when a student asked, "What is Puerto Rican Black?" I thought we had talked about it, cleared it up, but I hadn't heard all of the comments, nor could any of us really come up with a good definition of "Puerto Rican Black."

"I didn't want to start any trouble," Henry says.

"I don't think it's starting trouble to say what you think about something. I am behind any student who wants to speak up in this class."

"Thank-you." Henry says and I feel glad we had this talk.

Bob, Tom, Peggy and Judy have arrived, so it's scurrying time. I make sure they all have something to do and work with one at a time, while anxiously glancing up at each of the others to read their faces. Do they have questions? Are they stuck, bored?

Judy is getting better and better at sounding out the beginnings and endings of words. She likes the idea of doing a sound dictionary. Bob is doing well with syllabication, but his main worry tonight is the test he has to take at work. He wants a promotion. His brother Tom has work worries, too. He wants to be able to come back to class both nights every week, but extra work and overtime interfere. Peggy has written an excellent letter protesting the federal budget cuts. I promise to pass it on to the administrative coordinator of the community school and see that it gets mailed to people in Congress.

As I'm tucking it into my folder, a pear falls onto the table next to the file. Maria is back! She's feeling better, grinning, asking if I saved her homework. I know that the pear is only the beginning. At break, there will be peanuts, coconut cookies. She sits next

to Tony and greets Brian as he comes in.

While I'm going over Brian's homework with him, I see Myer. I know not to bother him, so I just wave as he carries his bag to the back of the room. He'll be with us as soon as he finishes supper. He works a 10 hour day.

When we've finished with the homework Brian shows me an Irish proverb he's recorded in his notebook.

I direct Maria to the syllabication work, careful to check out how she's doing with "e" and "i." They will always be "a" and "e" to her and that is as it should be but I hope that she will make them work for her in English, too.

Annette enters with a smile, proud of the extensive math work she's been doing on her own. She shows me a new project, too. She's researching women's occupations — salary, working conditions, etc. She's not ready to give it to me. She'll let me know when it's finished.

I have only a few minutes with Chris and Benton by the time they arrive. But I know that they, along with Myer, will speak up later and I'll know what they need help with tonight. A few minutes later, I'm ready to start the group work. Chris realizes I've forgotten to give him part of the syllabication exercise and he lets me have it.

"Well, it's too late now!" he complains. I sigh, shivering, and wonder if I have enough eyes, ears, hands, brain cells for this job. While I'm digging out the paper for him, I'm organizing my thoughts for announcements. I have to remember the State Hearing, the Women's Group, the Union Rep. Meeting, the fundraiser. I manage to get it all out, field questions, write it on the board. I check my watch — we're doing fine with time so far.

"Okay, homework questions." I pull out the exercise.

THINK OF A NUMBER. WRITE IT DOWN.
Subtract it from 10. Subtract your answer from 12.
Subtract it from 15. Subtract your answer from 25.
Subtract it from 20. Subtract your answer from 20.
Subtract it from 10. Subtract your answer from 20.
Subtract that answer from 30.
Subtract it from 10. Subtract your answer from 30.
Subtract that answer from 100.
Subtract it from 10. Subtract your answer from 20.
Subtract that answer from 30. Subtract that answer from 25.

Well, people have just had it with this, and it is **not** the way I say it is and I realize they're right. I should have asked them to start with a number **lower than ten.** But I like this anyway. Look what they've done in spite of the confusing directions. Now it's becoming a language as well as a math exercise. Let's talk about what this **means.** And we do, but then Henry insists that his way is the right way and puts his work on the board. And it's okay — he did it in negative numbers, so we talk about that for a few minutes. I'm expecting to lose people, but I draw the number line and check behind me and see some comprehension on people's faces.

It's time for a break. My temperature feels like 104 by now and my body aches. I'm crabby. Annette, gently and kindly, starts bossing me around.

"Sit down! You take break!."
Then she bosses Myer around.
"Get her orange juice."
Myer, as usual, is taking orders for everyone. Who wants coffee, tea, candy, soda? And Tony is passing out chocolate bars.

I write a few sentences on the board and sit down. People start asking me questions. I tell them I'm on break. They look at me, incredulous. I never take a break from **questions.**

"Annette says I'm on break."
Annette and I smile. I'm in a feverish euphoria now, beginning to see tonight's class as a peak experience. I settle down into a student's chair and look around me, hypersensitive to my own change in perspective. I look at what I've written on the board.

Think of a number
Subtract it from 20
Subtract the answer from 50

Chris, Judy, Benton and some others are arguing about what is says. But they are **reading,** without hesitation and correctly, not because I've asked them to, but because they want to figure it out, they want to **know**. They ask me for help and I refuse. But I'm watching in fascination, watching this magnificent thinking process go on.

Benton and Chris are vying for the board now, getting more and more enthusiastic in explaining their points of view. Chris has picked up on something important about the language of the problem, but he doesn't trust himself enough yet to

realize it. Benton, on the other hand, **knows** he's right, even when he's a little bit wrong. Judy is steadfastly holding to her position.

I joke to them.

"I should just come in every night, write something on the board, sit down and shut up."

They give me half a laugh. They're always good about laughing at me — it's part of what keeps me happy in my work — but tonight they're absorbed in the message on the board, in reading, in each other.

My doubts about the small group work creep back in. I go over the pros and cons in my mind, all the while trying to bat back my ego which keeps piping up with notions about improving my math — teaching skills. I have designed the exercise based on a suggestion from the book *Vision in Elementary Mathematics.*

I tell myself that the group interaction will be as important as the math work. But I've planned the way the groups will form. It seems that people should form their own groups. But what about skill levels? And what does dividing by skill levels tell people? That some people are better than others?

People are finishing their coffee. Myer has slipped me my orange juice. I down it quickly and remember Henry's stock line for difficult situations — "Go for it."

As if they had picked up on my silent reluctance, people act like their chairs are glued to the floor when I suggest that we form two groups. It seems to take fifteen minutes and even after people move they take a long time to face each other. I'm thinking, "Oh boy," but I press on.

I explain the exercise.

Think of a number
Subtract it from 20
Subtract the answer from 50

People have to consult with each other in order to record the answers and complete the number table and they don't seem enthusiastic about doing this. They start to bicker. All of the struggling, strengthening energy they put out during the break starts to knot into confusion and frustration. I explain, explain again, careful to include the information that they should choose numbers **lower than 20.**

Myer, persistent as ever in his effort to clarify, says, "So, you pick a number. You subtract it from 20. Then, you subtract your answer from 50. And you write down everybody else's answers, too."

"Yes!" I cry. "That's it!"

But people on the other side of the room are still arguing and I see that it's difficult to keep track of all the numbers, especially because people keep changing their minds about the numbers they want to choose.

My throat is getting sore and it's difficult to keep my mind clear to answer questions. Besides, everyone's talking at once.

"Would everyone just shut up for a minute?" My superego is exclaiming, "This is a teacher?"

To my right one of the women is saying something about what a terrible mood I'm in. Another answers, "I don't blame her."

There is relative silence for a moment. I explain again, but the next minute people are frantically asking questions. They refuse to ask each other. They keep asking me. I think about what happened during the break when I wasn't trying to direct. I decide to leave.

I announce, "I have to get some information from the front office. I'll be back in a few minutes. I think that you can figure this out better without me."

People look at me — some a little surprised, some annoyed, but they give me the okay and I leave. As I walk down the ramp, the fever and chills wash over me again, but I'm strangely energized, too. Difficult as the evening has been, something is happening in that room. I remember a comment a friend once made about "one's best and worst experiences coming together." She was referring to the experiences that **teach** us.

They're getting somewhere by the time I return. It's slow and painful and the atmosphere is thick with complaint and irritation, but I check with each person and discover that everyone has completed the computation. What remains most unclear is the number table aspect of the problem. I suggest that we form the large group again. I feel the collective sigh.

I draw a sample table on the board. We talk about tables of numbers, where we've seen them, how we might use them. I refer to a previous exercise that

asked people to choose, from a list of attitudes about work, those that applied to themselves. I ask the class to help me make, on the board, a table of numbers that will show how many people in our class have each of the listed work attitudes.

Gradually the air in the room starts to clear. I feel my own anxiety subsiding and notice that people's faces are relaxing. I'm back in the front of the room, where the teacher is "supposed to be," according to all of our many years of training. I know that this is part of the relief we feel.

I tell people that this activity is what some people call "doing statistics." I explain that statistics are facts involving numbers. I talk about statistics courses in college, their reputation for being difficult and boring. But I emphasize that we can explore anything we like through the use of statistics and that if the subject is interesting, the use of statistics can be interesting. I am passing on what I learned from the one teacher who made math interesting for me and who happened to teach statistics.

All the while Benton is shuffling through papers in his folder. Finally, he holds up a math exercise made from population statistics on Peurto Rico and New York. He points to a word at the bottom of the page.

With his wide open smile he says, "STATISTICS!"

Everybody laughs. Benton writes "statistics" on the board. I silently bless him for producing the effect on the class that I want to see now, a restoration of humor and relatedness. People ask questions about the word statistics, about number tables, about how to read them, use them. It's as if we've struggled out of a net.

We're ready for the nightly chant.

"A - apple - /a/!"

"What's that again? It may sound pretty to say, "ah" but this one is a-a-a-a-," I bleat.

"U - umbrella - uh!"

Everyone's laughing and carrying on and they're shouting so loud, you'd think it was a football game. In the lesson plan, this is simply called Phonics Practice.

I hustle to get the homework assignment out because coats go on quickly after the chanting stops. It's after nine and everyone's tired, ready to rush for buses. I pass out the assignment, answer questions. I barely finish before Judy speaks up to remind me about the chairs. I gesture for her to speak up about it. She wants me to do it, but finally says, "I want to make sure everybody puts chairs away before they leave."

Groans and grumbles ensue, but everyone pitches in and the room is clear in seconds. I'm glad Judy got fed up and said something.

All I have to do is make some notes, check attendance, clip together the homework, gather my materials, see Henry off in THE RIDE and climb to my office in the theatre loft to deposit my things. I should be out the door in no time.

Except that THE RIDE is late and a truck is blocking my car. I run around making phone calls. I pass another teacher who is trying to solve the parking lot problem. When THE RIDE finally arrives, the driver gets on the pay phone to his girlfriend while Henry sits in front of the building in the rain. I descend on the driver like Hitchcock's birds and the van is around the corner by the time I get the news that I can back my car out. I get to the back door just as I begin to feel the flu delirium overwhelming me.

At home sipping herb tea, I know that this will be a short-lived virus. 24 hours tops. Something is keeping me going. I'm already revising the number table exercise.

I've figured out a way to make it clear. I force myself not to delve into *Vision in Elementary Mathematics*. Instead, I rest my head on the chair back and turn out the light, chuckling and chanting to myself, "A - apple - /a/."

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Author Biography
Marty Duncan works in the Jackson/Mann Adult Education Program.

Dyslexia and Adult Illiteracy: Forging the Missing Link

by Carolyn Buell Kidder

As a teacher of dyslexic illiterate adults, I have been deeply dismayed to find the current extensive media coverage of the adult illiteracy crisis making almost no mention of dyslexia as one of the causes of that crisis. A recent attempt I made to register my dismay is a case in point. After viewing a highly publicized television documentary on adult illiteracy, I called the network's "audience reaction" line to point out the complete omission of any reference to dyslexia on the program. "That's a separate issue," I was emphatically told by the network staffperson on the other end of the line. When I stated that I had personally taught seventeen adult illiterates for whom dyslexia was precisely the issue, the staff person said that the network had done separate documentaries on dyslexia and that I was holding up another call.

I was also deeply dismayed to find no mention of dyslexia in Jonathan Kozol's recent book *Illiterate America*, which was otherwise throughly researched and uncompromising in its demand for a massive, immediate national adult literacy initiative. However, despite this lack of attention to dyslexia as a cause of adult illiteracy by the media and by activists such as Mr. Kozol, it is my contention that dyslexia and adult illiteracy are **not** "separate issues." I base my contention on two factors: first, my own personal teaching experience and the teaching experience of many other reading disabilities teachers who work with adult dyslexics, and second, established data as to the nature of dyslexia and its incidence in the general population.

Over the past twelve years I have personally provided remedial reading instruction to 150 children and 24 adults living in the Boston area; all of them had congenital neurological impairment specific to the brain's language processing center in the left temporal lobe, impairment which results in serious difficulties with word recognition for reading and is termed dyslexia. The 24 dyslexics who were adults ranged in age from 18 to 50 years; seven had adequate reading skills but serious spelling difficulties, eight could be classed as semi-literate with word recognition skills in the Grade 5-8 range, and nine were completely functionally illiterate with word recognition skills in the Grade 0-4 range. Some of these illiterate and semi-literate dyslexic adults came from modest middle class to affluent circumstances and had attended "good" public or private schools; others came from situations of poverty or near-poverty and had had limited, inferior schooling. All of them demonstrated intact higher intellectual functioning as measured by formal or informal testing and in some cases by anecdotal data relative to their skill at tasks requiring mechanical, spatial relations, mathematical or athletic aptitudes.

My own personal teaching experience is by no means unique, as many other reading disabilities specialists who work with adult dyslexics can attest. Furthermore, statistics indicate that 10-15% of the general population is born with a mild to severe degree of neurological impairment in the left temporal lobe of the brain which will adversely affect their ability to recognize the printed word if and when they are taught to read.[1] The impairment is believed to be a genetically passed trait, since dyslexia is frequently found in several members of the same family spanning more than one generation.[2] Also, at least twice as many dyslexics are males than females,[3] and the incidence of left-handedness is greater among dyslexics than it is in the general population.[4] However, other than favoring males and the left-handed, dyslexia is no respecter of persons; it occurs in people of all racial

groups, all ethnic groups and all socioeconomic groups.

Dyslexia is a permanent, chronic condition. It is also a medically stable condition; the congenital neurological impairment does not "heal" spontaneously but neither does it worsen spontaneously. It is present at birth but does not become evident until the task of learning to read begins making heavy demands on the child's neurological faculties for processing print. Dyslexic children grow up to be dyslexic adults; any improvement which occurs in a dyslexic child's or adult's ability to read can be attributed to the effective use of compensatory reading strategies, either self-taught or formally presented by others, rather than to any "spontaneous recovery" of the brain's capacity to recognize printed words.

Dyslexia was first described in medical literature in the late 1800's and was first systematically investigated in the 1920's by the neurologist Dr. Samuel T. Orton at the Mass. General Hospital. He coined the term "dyslexia" for the condition, which had previously been known as "word blindness" and "strephosymbolia." Dr. Orton also first developed the theory that word recognition difficulties in persons of intact intellectual functioning had a neurological base.[5] In 1979, substantial evidence as to the validity of Dr. Orton's theory was provided by the research efforts of two Boston neurologists, Drs. Thomas Kemper and Albert Galaburda. Their microscopic dissection of the brain of a twenty-year-old accident victim known to be dyslexic revealed striking abnormalities in nerve cell arrangement in the left hemisphere.[6] This investigation of dyslexics' brain cell configuration is currently continuing at the Dyslexia Research Laboratory of the Beth Israel Hospital.

One specific effect of this left hemisphere cellular disorganization is almost always impairment in the faculty of visual perception, which is critical to success at the initial task of the reading process: word recognition. Visual perception is the ability to register and retain in the brain the visual images transmitted over the optic nerve from the eye. In order to recognize a word accurately, the visual image of the letter string of a word must be accurately registered and permanently stored in memory. If the letter string is registered in the wrong sequence, if letter shapes are registered as mirror images of themselves or if the letter string is registered correctly but does not "lock" into memory, a person suffering from this visual perceptual dysfunction will have extreme difficulty acquiring a significant sight vocabulary for reading.

This is the difficulty almost all persons identified as dyslexic experience; their dilemma is analogous to the dilemma of a talented photographer operating a fine camera into which has been placed a film of poor quality. Just as the photographer cannot demonstrate his or her picture-taking talent without a reliable film to accurately register and retain the visual images being photographed, so dyslexics cannot demonstrate their ability to comprehend printed text if impairment in their neurological "film" causes them not to be able to reliably register and retain the visual images of the letter strings in the words before them on the printed page. They experience constantly the feelings of frustration and failure which are experienced by a photographer who takes roll after roll of exposed film in to be developed, only to receive back packets of snapshots that are mostly blank, incomplete or distorted.

Teaching Approaches:

Since dyslexics have such great difficulty registering and retaining the images of words as wholes, the most effective approaches for building word recognition skill are phonic ones which emphasize breaking down a letter string into its syllables and letter patterns and then systematically sounding out and blending each letter pattern and syllable. However, merely advising a dyslexic student to "sound out words you don't know" is not effective; extensive formal drill in systematically sounding out and blending large numbers of words containing each phonic letter or letter pattern is essential. This drill should incorporate multi-sensory reinforcement as much as possible, particularly the kinesthetic reinforcement of writing. For example, the student should often be asked to write letters down while sounding them out rather than just looking at letters and saying their sounds; the act of writing gives kinesthetic reinforcement to the visual/auditory associations of particular letter shapes with particular speech sounds. Finally, to be truly effective, a phonics program for dyslexics must maintain rigid control of the phonic content of all word lists and tests presented. The student must not be asked to sound out any phonic elements which have not been previously introduced, yet at the same time the phonic element currently being studied must be heavily represented in the drill lists and reading selections.

One reason that conventional phonics lessons as taught in even the "best" public schools do not

benefit dyslexics is due to the lack of systematic coordination between the daily phonics workbook drill and the basal reader selection. A first lesson in a phonics workbook might drill on the sound of short a, yet be followed by a first selection in a basal reader containing text such as the following: "Look, look, look and see. See Spot. See Spot run. Run, Spot run." This selection has only one short a in the entire passage and contains two vowel pairs, a consonant blend, the short o and the short u, none of which would have been addressed in the first phonics workbook lesson. This lack of phonic carry-over and control between phonics lesson and basal reader does not seriously impair the acquisition of word recognition skill on the part of the 85-90% of the grade school students who have intact visual perception faculties; their sight memories lock in the whole words of the basal reader after a few exposures so they do not have to rely on phonics to decode the separate elements of the words. The remaining 10-15% of the grade school students who are dyslexic, however, have to rely on phonics to compensate for poor visual memory for words, yet they cannot make use of the phonics workbook lesson to help them recognize the words in the basal reader because there is no systematic carry-over and control between the two. Dyslexics participating in such conventional reading programs fail to learn to read in them, regardless of the skill level of the teacher or the interest level of the text. As adults enrolled in remedial reading programs, these dyslexics will of course continue to fail to acquire word recognition skill if the remedial lesson does not provide close coordination between its phonic component and its reading selections.

Simply recruiting volunteer tutors to provide reading instruction to dyslexics on a one-to-one basis is often not effective either. Of course, tutorial instruction, even with an untrained volunteer, provides certain learning conditions which are often critical to the success of remedial education: immediate reinforcement of correct responses, immediate correction of errors, complete individualization of the pace and quantity of drill and constant emotional encouragement. However, if the curriculum being used in the tutorial is not a highly structured phonics-based curriculum and if the tutorial lessons do not contain extensive multi-sensory drill in sounding out blending technique, then a dyslexic's prognosis for making significant progress in such a tutorial is quite limited.

However, by combining the remedial advantages of one-to-one tutorial with a phonics approach involving extensive multi-sensory decoding drill with rigid control of phonic content, I am finding in my private tutorial practice that my illiterate and semi-literate adults are progressing at a consistant rate of one grade level of improvement in word recognition skill per each 33 hours of tutorial instruction. This combination of structured phonics-based teaching and one-to-one instruction has been the dominant model for dyslexia remediation for adults. It is the model used by the three programs in the Boston area which provide reading remediation for adult dyslexics: the Adult Reading Clinic at the Mass. General Hospital, the Adult Tutoring Program at the Carroll School in Lincoln and The Tutoring Network's registry of educational therapists in private tutoring practice.

However, the success of two recently opened schools for dyslexic adults in other parts of the country suggests that a small-group instructional model can be highly effective as well. One of these schools opened in 1984 in Washington, D.C. as an adjunct of American University's Graduate School of Education;[7] the other opened in 1985 in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii as an adjunct of a private school for dyslexic children there.[8] Both of these programs admit **only** dyslexic adults, so that their teaching approaches are finely tuned to the specialized reading instructional needs of those with visual perceptual impairment but intact intellectual functioning. Both schools schedule two three-hour classes per week. Both also arrange their classes in ten-week instructional modules, eliminating the tremendous waste of the students' and instructor's time when there is an open enrollment policy allowing students to enter a class at any point during the year. Having prospective students wait for the beginning of a new module avoids disruption of the learning program for the current students because the instructor does not have to go back over quantities of previously learned material for the benefit of the incoming student. Also, the potential for failure on the part of the incoming student if he or she is unable to "catch on" and "catch up" quickly is eliminated.

After only a year or two of operation, both the Washington, D.C. school and the Pearl Harbor school are reporting significant gains in their students' reading skill development, even as much as two to three grade levels' gain per ten-week, sixty-hour class module, or one grade level of gain per 20-30 hours of small class instruction. It should be noted, however, that most of the students enrolled in these programs differ significantly in terms of their socioeconomic circumstances from the

majority of students enrolled in public-funded adult literacy programs and also from the majority of the adult students I tutor in my private practice. Most of the Washington, D.C. and Pearl Harbor students have high school diplomas (even though they may read far below high school level), and they are employed in jobs which earn them enough to be able to afford the modest tuition which these programs charge. However, I believe that a public-funded adult literacy program serving a population with far less schooling and far more limited economic resources could still find its dyslexic students making significant gains in a small class instructional model if the key features of the Washington, D.C. and Pearl Harbor schools were replicated: providing separate classes for the dyslexics in the student population, using specialized instructional techniques designed to help them compensate for the visual memory deficits, and closing enrollment in a class module once the module has begun.

Providing separate classes for dyslexics and either hiring teachers with specialized training to work with them or providing specialized in-service training for the current teaching staff costs money but gets proven results, as the Washington, D.C. school and the Pearl Harbor school demonstrate. An adult literacy center seeking funding to develop an innovative pilot program for its dyslexic population can tap sources of financial support beyond just those funding the current adult literacy initiatives; since dyslexia is considered a physiological, medical disability, programs serving dyslexics would be eligible to apply for funding from such government agencies as the Federal Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped. Individual dyslexic adults are eligible to receive the vocational training services of the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, which can include remedial reading instruction if improved reading skill is deemed necessary to achieve the employment goal established in the client's IWRP (Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan.)[9]

Also, there are two private organizations which make grants to programs for dyslexics: the Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities (FCLD) in New York City and the Orton Dyslexia Society (ODS), which has headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. In recent years the Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities has made grants totaling over one million dollars annually to model programs serving the learning disabled, including dyslexics. FCLD concerns itself with issues and programs affecting learning disabled adults as well as children. It has recently joined the National Coalition on Literacy; as a member of this coalition it intends to become, in the words of its executive director, "the voice proclaiming the fact that undiagnosed learning disabilities are responsible for a large portion of the alarming illiteracy rate among adults in the United States."[10] The Orton Dyslexia Society's major funding efforts have historically been in the area of medical research, but the Society has recently made a strong commitment to the current national adult literacy campaign by joining Project Literacy United States (PLUS), the outreach program initiated by the American Broadcasting Company and the Public Broadcasting Service. Three other possible sources of funding, which were tapped by the Washington, D.C. and the Pearl Harbor schools for adult dyslexics, were Catholic Charities, the United Way and private businesses.

Screening for Dyslexia

In making application for funding from organizations serving the physically handicapped or the learning disabled, identification of the dyslexics in an adult literacy center's student population by formal diagnosis of dyslexia entails administering tests which measure intellectual potential, achievement level in reading skills and various visual and auditory* perceptual faculties. Many agencies which provide services for adult dyslexics, such as the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission and the Talking Books service of the Library of Congress, require this testing to be done by a psychologist or a neurologist; others, such as Recordings for the Blind in Princeton, New Jersey, will accept the diagnostic assessment of a learning disabilities teacher who has specialized training in educational testing. In the immediate Boston area there are several excellent hospital outpatient clinics and private diagnostic centers which specialize in the diagnosis of dyslexia and other learning disabilities. Their fees are covered by medical insurance, including Medicaid; the fees may also be paid by the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission as part of the procedure for determining the eligibility of a client to receive the vocational training/placement services of the Commission.

However, if an adult literacy center wishes simply to identify its dyslexic students who might be appropriate candidates for formal diagnosis, let me

*Some dyslexics have auditory perceptual deficits, such as confusing short vowel sounds, which can aggravate the word recognition difficulties produced by their visual perceptual deficits.

offer the following simple two-step screening procedure which I developed for use in my private tutorial practice and which I find to be quite revealing. The first step is to administer a test of word recognition consisting of lists of unrelated words arranged in order of increasing difficulty. The student is asked to read aloud as many words as he or she wishes to attempt. The second step is to administer a test of full-text comprehension consisting of a series of short passages with multiple choice questions following each passage. However, I do not ask the student to read **this** test either orally or silently; instead, **I read the entire test aloud to the student** — the passages, the questions and the possible choices of answers for each question. The student may simply listen to me read or may follow along visually in a copy of the test booklet. The student indicates his or her choice of answer to each question by saying or pointing to "A, B, C, or D."

The word recognition test which I prefer to use is the Slosson Oral Reading Test. The "Reading" subtest of the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) or the "Word Identification" subtest of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests could also be used, but the Slosson has more words per grade level than the other two. The passage comprehension test I favor is the "Reading Comprehension" subtest of the Nelson Reading Skills Test published by Houghton Mifflin. The Nelson gives the examiner the choice of three series of passages at three separate levels of difficulty; also, its content is modern, varied and remarkably free of racial, ethnic and sexist bias. Both the Slosson and each of the three levels of the Nelson yield grade level scores and are normed from Grade K through Grade 10-12, so that a meaningful comparison of the results of the two tests can be made.

Impaired word recognition in the presence of intact or above average intellectual functioning is the classic profile of dyslexia. If the "print-processing" score obtained with the Slosson is low and the comprehension score obtained on the Nelson with the print barrier removed is significantly higher, then the dyslexic profile is at least roughly suggested in terms of a differential between intellectual functioning and word recognition even though the student's precise level of intellectual functioning is not established. The lower the Slosson word recognition score and the greater the differential between the Slosson score and the Nelson comprehension score, the more strongly dyslexia is suggested. In screening adults for dyslexia this way, I have gotten spreads of two, four, even nine grade levels; one example is the adult I recently tested who scored at Grade 1.7 on the Slosson and Grade 5.8 on the orally presented Nelson: a four grade differential. (This person had previously received a formal diagnosis of dyslexia from a leading learning disabilities testing center in the Boston area.) Another example would be the score profile of Grade 3 on the Slosson and Grade 12 on the orally administered Nelson which I obtained a few years ago in testing a 17-year-old, court-adjudicated, inner-city youth who had not been to school since he was 14 or 15. I judged this nine-grade differential to be indicative of remarkably high reasoning ability and extremely severe dyslexia.

The orally presented Nelson affords students an opportunity to demonstrate their verbal comprehension and reasoning ability unencumbered by the "print barrier;" this advantage is also provided by the verbal subtest of the formal WAIS-R IQ test, in which questions are posed orally to the subject. However, the orally presented Nelson also affords students the opportunity to demonstrate verbal reasoning ability even if they do not have any prior knowledge of the subject matter of the passages, since all the facts they need to define a term, draw a conclusion or make an inference are included in the passages' content. Also, they do not need well-developed verbal expressive ability to score well in answering the questions; they answer by simply picking one of the four already-formulated answer choices. The verbal subtest of the WAIS-R, on the other hand, requires the subject to have extensive prior knowledge and highly-developed verbal expressive ability in order to score well; these contingencies sometimes produce a "false low" score for a subject who has had limited educational and cultural opportunity and is not verbally facile even though the score is not being falsely pulled down by requiring the subject to read. I have more than once found that an orally presented Nelson subtest brought out intellectual ability which had remained hidden behind an orally presented WAIS-R.

In addition to establishing the student's score profile on the Slosson and the orally established Nelson, examining the types of word recognition errors made on the Slosson sometimes yields valuable diagnostic clues. Letter sequencing errors, such as reading "was" as "saw" and letter shape reversals, such as reading "bump" as "dump" are "red flags" for dyslexia, since errors of these kinds are caused by visual perceptual processing deficits. However, not all dyslexics exhibit visual sequencing or visual discrimination difficulties, so the absence of such errors cannot be interpreted as an absence of

dyslexia. A deficit in the perceptual faculty of visual memory can in and of itself severely impair the ability to recognize words **without** the "added aggravation" of visual sequencing and visual discrimination deficits compounding the memory problem.

It is possible that a low word recognition score on the Slosson could be indicating a lack of prior exposure to the words on the test lists rather than lack of a strong perceptual "film" to register and retain them visually. The person administering the Slosson should therefore always ask the student how many years of formal schooling he or she has had. However, even in the course of sparse and inferior schooling, most individuals get sufficient exposure to at least the Grades K, 1 and 2 words on the Slosson to be able to "lock them into visual memory" if that visual memory capacity is intact. However, to more conclusively resolve the question of lack of exposure versus lack of visual memory deficit, formal tests can be administered which can confirm or rule out a visual memory deficit. One common type requires the drawing of figures from memory after looking at them briefly; the Detroit Memory for Designs subtest and the Beery Visual-Motor Integration Test are examples of such tests.

A final component of an informal screening for dyslexia is to interview and observe students with low word recognition skill to establish what talents they may have in non-reading areas such as mechanics, athletics, music, art, etc., which they may demonstrate in their work, school or personal activities. Many dyslexics have outstanding raw natural abilities which are evident even if they have had no opportunity to develop and train them. When these talents can be harnessed, dyslexics have become outstanding achievers in non-reading related areas, as exemplified by such celebrity dyslexics as basketball superstar Patrick Ewing, world motor racing champion Jackie Stewart and Emmy-award winning BBC actress Susan Hampshire.

If an adult literacy center elects to undertake a screening program to identify the dyslexics among its student population, what percentage can be expected to match the dyslexic profile? Because of the statistical incidence of dyslexia in the general population, a center would expect to find that a **minimum** of 10-15% of its students were dyslexic. However, the student population of an adult remedial reading program is not a random, general population. It is already a population of poor readers, and the percentage of poor readers who are dyslexic is probably much higher than 10-15%, perhaps as high as 30% or even 50%, according to one estimate.[11]

Applied to the national population, these percentages would indicate that 18-27 million (10-15%) of the 180 million adults in the United States are dyslexic to some degree, and that somewhere between 2 million (10%) and 10 million (50%) of them would be among the 21 million adult Americans who are illiterate.[12] This is a massive number of adult dyslexics within a massive number of illiterate adults. Due to their organic, neurological impairment, these adult dyslexics cannot process or "digest" words through conventional instructional approaches, no matter how skillfully and lovingly those conventional approaches are presented. Therefore, in implementing the massive literacy initiative called for by Jonathan Kozol, the specialized instructional needs of dyslexic illiterate adults must be addressed or the initiative will fail to a significant degree. I call upon all those currently serving adult illiterates and those currently serving adult dyslexics to work together in implementing this initiative so that **all** adults who seek to transform their lives by becoming literate will receive the type of instruction they need to achieve their goal.

FOOTNOTES

1. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, *Facts About Dyslexia* (Washington, D.C.: n.d.), p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. Landmark School, *Landmark School* admissions brochure (Prides Crossing, MA: n.d.), p. 11.
4. Drake D. Duane, M.D., "The Dyslexia-Plus Syndromes: Theoretical and Educational Importance," *NEBODS Newsletter* (New England Branch of the Orton Dyslexia Society, Spring 1986): p. 3.
5. Ora Baer, "Decoding the Riddle of Dyslexia," *Boston Globe*, 1 November 1981, Sunday *Magazine* section.
6. Ibid.
7. Sally L. Smith, "A Night School for LD Adults," *Their World* (Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities, 1985): p. 26.
8. Lois Taylor, "Dyslexia: A View from a Difficult Vantage Point," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 May 1986.
9. Kidder, Carolyn Buell, "Rehabilitation Services for the Learning Disabled Adult," The Tutoring Network *Exchange* 2:2 (Fall/Winter 1984): p. 1.

10. Arlyn Gardner, "Executive Director's Message," Their World (Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities, 1986): p. 100.
11. Sylvia Lotspeich Greene, "Organizing a Language Arts Program for Functionally Illiterate Adults in a Classroom Setting," *Connections: A Journal of Adult Literacy* (1985): p. 29-39.
12. Ezra Bowen, "Losing the War of Letters," *Time*, 5 May 1986, p. 68.

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Author Biography

Carolyn Buell Kidder earned her M.Ed. in Learning Disabilities from Lesley College in 1974 and her A.B. in Religion from Mount Holyoke College in 1971. She is also a 1973 graduate of the training program in the Orton-Gillingham reading method at Mass. General Hospital. She holds Mass. teaching certificates in Moderate Special Needs and Elementary Education.

Between 1974 and 1983 Ms Kidder worked as a reading disabilities teacher in public junior high schools in Concord and Weymouth, in the PAL Program at Curry College, in an alternative school for juvenile delinquents in Roxbury and at the Adult Reading Clinic of the Mass. General Hospital. Over the past four years she has developed a full-time private tutoring practice teaching reading, writing and spelling to dyslexic children, adolescents and adults. She also administers diagnostic screening testing for dyslexia and provides academic support for dyslexic college and secondary students. She has four years experience as a Chapter 766 Core Evaluation Chairperson/Case Chairperson and will advocate for parents of dyslexic children in public schools who receive or need Chapter 766 services. She also advocates for dyslexic adults seeking funding and services from the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission.

As a consultant, Ms Kidder recently provided program evaluation and in-service training for the staff of an adult basic education center who desired to identify LD clients among their student population and to modify their reading class instruction to meet the specialized needs of these LD clients. Ms Kidder also recently served as a volunteer consultant to the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission's staff development office, helping to prepare a two-day in-service training program on LD for the Commission's vocational counseling staff statewide.

In addition to teaching, testing, consulting and advocacy, Ms Kidder has a special interest in designing and experimenting with curriculum materials; a major project was her pilot study of the Kurzweil Reading Machine (a computer device originally developed for the blind) as a reading aid for dyslexics. She also co-founded The Tutoring Network, a non-profit organization providing information and tutorial referral to persons seeking the service of LD specialists in private practice.

Competency-Based ESL, One Step Forward or Two Steps Back?

by Elsa Roberts Auerbach

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While competency-based education has become widely accepted as the state-of-the-art approach to adult ESL, there has been little published discussion of its theoretical assumptions or social implications. This article examines eight key descriptors of competency-based education in light of critiques from the fields of curriculum theory, adult basic education, and second language acquisition theory. The results of an informal survey of teacher attitudes toward competency-based adult education in ESL are incorporated. The article situates the competency-based approach in its historical context as part of a tradition of socializing immigrants for specific roles in the existing socioeconomic order. It suggests that the systems demands of this approach (for accountability and "social utility") may impose constraints that get in the way of such pedagogical considerations and student-centered learning. The article concludes by stressing the need for further debate and analysis, rather than uncritical acceptance, of competency-based systems.

As national attention has been focused on the "literacy crisis" in the last decade, there have been increased demands for teacher accountability, for measurable assessment of student progress, and for skills-based curricula which prepare students for specified life tasks. In response to these demands, competency-based systems have been widely implemented in teacher education and in elementary, high school, and adult education programs.

Increasingly, competency-based education (CBE) has come to be accepted as the state-of-the-art approach to adult ESL by national policymakers and leaders in curriculum development as well. The Center for Applied Linguistics asserts in *From the Classroom to the Workplace: Teaching ESL to Adults* (1983) that "the incorporation of insights from competency-based instruction into the ESL curriculum is perhaps the most important breakthrough in adult ESL" (p. 1). Findley and Nathan (1980) promote it as a "successful model for the delivery of educational services that allows for responsible and accountable teaching" (p. 222).

On the national, state, and local levels, more and more major funding sources are mandating that programs be competency-based. Recent examples include the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), state-supported adult education (including ESL) in California, and the Adult Literacy Initiative in Boston. California took the lead in developing a statewide, standardized, competency-based curriculum and testing system with its California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). The Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) project, originally designed to develop guidelines for refugee programs, has now become a standardized, comprehensive, competency-based curriculum, testing, and leveling package for all ORR programs. By the end of 1986, any refugee who wishes to receive federal assistance will be required to be enrolled in a competency-based program.[1]

What differentiates ESL from other fields which have espoused CBE is the relative lack of theoretical analysis of its assumptions and implications. While debate has flourished in the domains of curriculum theory (e.g., Aoki, 1984; Apple, 1979; Freire, 1970, 1981, 1985; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b; Whitson, 1985),

teacher training (see, for example, the extensive bibliography in De Lawter, 1982), elementary and secondary education (e.g. Anyon, 1980; Mitchell, 1985), and adult education (e.g., Collins, 1983; Freire, 1970, 1981, 1985; Kozol, 1980), there has been a one-sided and relatively uncritical acceptance of CBE in the literature of adult ESL (Berg & Schwartz, 1981; Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983; Findley & Nathan, 1980; Grognet & Crandall, 1981). The primary focus of discussion is on the justification and implementation of CBE systems, on methods "rather than the underlying intellectual assumptions that generate methods" (Raimes, 1983, p. 538). Those criticisms which have been expressed in print focus primarily on difficulties of implementation (e.g., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983, p. 13).

The lack of debate about CBE in the literature of adult ESL is made more striking by the fact that teachers charged with implementing it by no means share the uncritical perspective of curriculum developers, funders, and policymakers. In Boston, for example, there has been widespread grass-roots questioning of both administrative and pedagogical aspects of CBE; 80% of the competency-based ESL teachers interviewed in an informal survey (Auerbach, 1985) indicated that they had strong reservations about CBE. Based on these interviews and a review of critiques of CBE from other fields, this article attempts to bring the debate about CBE in ESL into the public forum.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF COMPETENCY-BASED ADULT ESL

There is no single monolithic beast which can be identified as the competency-based adult education (CBAE) model. Precisely because there has been so much variation in interpretation and implementation, a survey of leading CBAE educators was conducted to arrive at some consensus about what CBAE means. From this work emerged the following definition: "Competency-based adult education is a performance-based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in society" (Parker & Taylor, 1980, pp. 12-13). This definition has been adapted to ESL as follows: "A competency-based curriculum is a performance-based outline of language tasks that lead to a demonstrated mastery of the language associated with specific skills that are necesseary for individuals to function proficiently in the society in which they live" (Grognet & Crandall, 1982, p. 3).

This characterization of CBAE/ESL reflects the dual influence of developments in second language acquisition theory and in adult based education. From the former comes the notion that meaning-based communicative language instruction is more effective than grammar-based, form-oriented teaching; the stress is on what learners can **do** with language rather than on what they **know** about it (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983, p. 11). CBAE/ESL reflects the shift from viewing language learning as an end in itself to viewing it as a means for learners to achieve their own individual goals. As such, it is strongly influenced by the Council of Europe's Threshold Level Syllabus (van Ek, 1976). In addition, CBAE/ESL draws heavily on the humanistic, learner-centered approach exemplified by the work of Curran (1976), Moskowitz (1978), and Stevick (1980).

From adult learning theory comes the general principle that adults learn best when instruction is related to life experiences and practical needs. Amoroso (1984) characterizes three interrelated perspectives on adult learning: (a) In the behaviorist perspective, specific and observable skills are identified a priori; "the criteria for measuring success are made explicit and performance at a prescribed level of mastery is assumed to be a valid measure" (p. 3); (b) the primary assumption of the developmental perspective is that learning is facilitated when instruction goals are matched with characteristics of the adult learner and when learners are involved in determining the content and direction of their education; and (c) the aims of instruction for the instrumental perspective are determined by economic and political considerations, that is, the usefulness of curriculum content in enabling the students to function in society.

Perhaps the single strongest influence on CBAE/ESL is Northrup's (1977) *The Adult Performance Level Study* (APL), which combines these three perspectives. This study, commissioned by the U.S. Office of Education, examined a wide variety of tasks and functions that adults perform in American society and categorized the behaviors necessary to perform these tasks in terms of five knowledge areas and four basic skill areas. Sixty-five main competencies were identified, with many more subobjectives.

For ESL, the legacy of the APL has been threefold. First, it has provided a framework for defining adult ESL in terms of tasks necessary for successful

functioning in society. Second, it has provided a model for curriculum development based on performance objectives and measured outcomes. Third, it has identified general categories of competencies and specified objectives within each category which in many cases have served as guidelines for curriculum content (e.g., Keltner, Howard, & Lee, 1981).

While there is much variety in its implementation, certain common descriptors recur in almost every discussion of CBAE. On the basis of an examination of the literature (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983; Findley & Nathan, 1980; Grognet & Crandall, 1982; Hertling, 1981; James, 1981; Kasworm, 1980; Nickse, 1980; Parker & Taylor, 1980; Spady, 1977; Tibbetts & Westby-Gibson, 1983), eight key features have been extracted to serve as a framework for the analysis of CBAE/ESL.

1. A focus on successful functioning in society: The goal is to enable students to become autonomous individuals capable of coping with the demands of the world.
2. A focus on life skills: Rather than teaching language in isolation, CBAE/ESL teaches language as a function of communication about concrete tasks. Students are taught just those language forms/skills required by the situations in which they will function. These forms are determined by "empirical assessment of language required" (Findley & Nathan, 1980, p. 224).
3. Task- or performance-centered orientation: What counts is what students can do as a result of instruction. The emphasis is on overt behaviors rather than on knowledge or the ability to talk about language and skills.
4. Modularized instruction: "Language learning is broken down into manageable and immediately meaningful chunks" (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983, p. 2). Objectives are broken into narrowly focused subobjectives so that both teachers and students can get a clear sense of progress.
5. Outcomes which are made explicit a priori: Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher. They are specified in terms of behavioral objectives so that students know exactly what behaviors are expected of them.
6. Continuous and ongoing assessment: Students are pretested to determine what skills they lack and posttested after instruction in that skill. If they do not achieve the desired level of mastery, they continue to work on the objective and are retested. Program evaluation is based on test results and, as such, is considered objectively quantifiable.
7. Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives: Rather than the traditional paper-and-pencil tests, assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate prespecified behaviors.
8. Individualized, student-centered instruction: In content, level, and pace, objectives are defined in terms of individual needs; prior learning and achievement are taken into account in developing curricula. Instruction is not time based; students progress at their own rates and concentrate on just those areas in which they lack competence.

CRITIQUES OF CBAE

Focus on Successful Functioning in Society

Proponents of CBAE often claim that it is a process and a tool which can be used for any purpose determined by practitioners and that it thus has no inherent sociopolitical bias or agenda. What it is used for depends on the people using it, and since CBAE is student centered, this ideally means the students. Schaull (1970), however, summarizes Freire's view that no curriculum or educational process is neutral in itself:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration ... into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 15)

Critics of CBAE argue that the mode of curriculum itself carries hidden assumptions about reality and the social order which serve to support the current socioeconomic order. CBAE does this, they argue, first of all by the ways in which **reality** and **knowledge** are defined. In its effort to characterize reality, CBAE adopts a "scientific" stance. Following Tyler's (1949) model for rational curriculum development, the first task in CBAE/ESL is to characterize, through "objective" analysis (as in the API study), the language and skills required for the learner's successful functioning in life situations. The fact that competencies are grounded in research, argue proponents of CBAE, establishes for the first time a rational basis for adult education (Kasworm, 1980).

Critics, however, challenge the underlying presupposition that there are objectively definable norms for success: The notion of competence is itself value governed. Kozol (1980) argues that researchers (academics and bureaucrats) impose

their own norms for "what is meant by 'adult living requisites' as well as by 'adult success' " (p. 54). The result is that competencies might include reading directions or following orders in a job, but not the ability "to change or question the nature of that job" (p. 54).

Critics further question the conceptualization of **reality** (as expressed through the listing of competencies) as something external, objective, and researchable. Collins (1983) argues that this is a static view, a view which assumes there is "a social reality already in place rather than one which is in flux over which we have conscious influence" (p. 182). An alternative view of reality is as a social construct, an interaction between the subjective and the objective, in which one's perception and analysis of reality contribute to shaping that reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). "The content of any experience is necessarily bound up with the experience itself ... Content cannot reasonably be seen to exist independently of its interpretation" (Candlin, 1984, p. 33).

These two positions—one viewing reality as having external validity and the other viewing it as fluid, contextualized, and socially constructed—have very different implications for curriculum. Green (1971) makes a distinction between **curriculum as fact** and **curriculum as practice.** In the former, which closely parallels Freire's (1970) notion of the banking model of education, there is a structure of socially prescribed knowledge to be mastered by students. Here, the function of education is to transmit this knowledge and to socialize learners according to the values of the dominant socioeconomic group. The teacher's job is to devise more and more effective ways to transmit skills; what counts is success in delivery. Educational progress is defined in terms of "improving" delivery systems.

In curriculum as practice, the focus shifts from how students can absorb and replicate knowledge to how they can synthesize and generate knowledge. The students' concern is with the process of making sense out of reality; Freire (1970, 1981, 1985) extends this to **shaping** reality. Knowledge becomes what is accomplished in the collaborative work between students and teachers. De Lawter (1982) argues that CBAE clearly fits the curriculum-as-fact model, in which students are taught to receive knowledge rather than to generate it.

Focus on Life Skills

Critics further argue that CBAE is determinist in that it prescribes social roles for students; both the form and content of instruction prepare students to fit into the status quo in particular ways. This criticism derives from the work of curriculum theorists (e.g., Apple, 1979; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983a, 1983b) who see education as a powerful force in transmitting cultural values and reproducing class relationships. They claim that the way knowledge is distributed often reinforces the power structure. The selection, organization, and evaluation of curriculum content are value governed: What we choose to teach, how we teach it, and how we evaluate students reflect our view of the social order and our students' place in it.

What kinds of social roles does CBAE socialize students for? James (1981) says that the danger in CBAE is that is imposes middle-class norms and values on students. One could argue, however, that CBAE in fact socializes students for a limited range of working-class roles. Educational historians Cohen and Lazerson (1977) have shown that a recurring theme in American education is the school's training students from lower socioeconomic strata in just those skills, values, and behaviors necessary for blue-collar jobs. Since the turn of the century, schools have selectively taught occupational skills and attitudes deemed important by industry. For example, an ESL class at the International Harvester Company in the early 1900's included the following lesson in socialization for the work force (cited in Korman, 1967):

> I hear the whistle, I must hurry...
> It is time to go into the shop...
> I change my clothes and get ready to work...
> I work until the whistle blows to quit.
> I leave my place nice and clean. (p. 144)

Today, some proponents of CBAE openly acknowledge that serving the needs of the economic system is one of the aims of CBAE. Spady (1977) argues that improving "the social utility of student outputs" (p. 13) is one of its primary goals. Eyre (1980) suggests that there needs to be even more input from business and industry in identifying competencies. Current CBAE ESL texts seem to follow the tradition of preparing students to fulfill employers' needs. Many mention only minimum-wage jobs as options for newcomers—for example, busboy, maid, janitor, and factory worker—and teach language functions of subservience, such as apologizing and following orders (see Auerbach &

Burgess, 1985). They often explicitly teach those behaviors required in menial jobs. The following excerpt from a recent CBAE/ESL text (Walsh, 1984) is strikingly similar in this respect to the texts from the turn of the century:

> 1. Go to work on time. Don't be late...
> 2. Work hard. Don't be lazy.
> 3. Work carefully. Always do your best.
> 4. Ask questions if you don't understand or are not sure...
> 5. Be friendly. Get along with everybody. Be nice to the other workers...Smile at them. Be clean and neat. (p. 66)

Teachers claim that, more and more, they are required to eliminate any curriculum content that is not directly related to employment; as one teacher pointed out, "Cutting off anything not related to getting people into jobs guarantees that they'll never get anything but the lowest level jobs" (Auerbach, 1985).

Performance-Based, Behavioral Orientation

Another concern is that not only the content but the **process** of instruction in CBAE/ESL may contribute to socializing students for subordinate roles. The emphasis on behavior and performance rather than on the development of cognitive skills is consistent with the kinds of education which have traditionally been stressed for working-class students. Anyon (1980) showed that in elementary education there is a "hidden curriculum" which prepares students from different social classes for very different life roles. In the working-class schools she studied, the curriculum focused on following the steps of a procedure in order to arrive at the correct outcome; mechanical rote behavior was emphasized with little decision making. In middle-class schools, the focus was on the cognitive processes involved in the tasks; upper-class schools emphasized creativity and self-management.

While this analysis may be oversimplified, the point remains that the type of skills that are taught and the way they are taught often depend on the social continuum: the lower one goes on the socioeconomic ladder, the lower the level of skills being taught (Heath, 1985). It is interesting to note that while the cutting edge in university-level ESL is concern with the creation for meaning (for example, in research on the composing process), for adult ESL, the concern is with breaking language into subskills, with behaviors and performance.

Ironically, the argument that a behavioral focus is necessary to prepare students for the demands of the workplace is not borne out by research; the work of Pottinger, Klemp, and McClelland (see Pottinger, 1979) indicates that skills lists which focus on overt behaviors associated with specific jobs fail to capture significant areas of competence. It is not the **use** of knowledge that characterizes competence but the development of cognitive skills in the **acquisition** of knowledge. The covert processes, not easily observable, are what distinguish competent performance.

Klemp's (1979) research points to three specific abilities as critical: the ability to organize diverse information, the ability to see many sides of a complex issue, and the ability to learn from and apply experience in a new situation. This research suggests that emphasis on teaching overt behaviors may prepare students for only the most mechnical, low-level competence. As London (cited in Collins, 1983) argues, "Increasingly a premium must be placed not so much on what to think, but on how to think critically" (p. 181). This, rather than the learning of situation-specific behaviors, may be the best tool students can have in facing a rapidly changing society.

As one teacher pointed out (Auerbach, 1985), CBAE programs (as well as other adult education programs) often presuppose that critical thinking skills are "higher order" skills and therefore cannot be taught until after basic skills are mastered. The result, she argued, is that the cart is put before the horse: In precisely those areas where critical thinking should be integrated from the beginning (e.g., in dealing with consumer, workplace, or health issues), it is often relegated to the upper levels (which many students never get to because they are bored by basic skills work).

Modularized Instruction

One way in which CBAE may inhibit critical thinking is by modularizing, or chunking, instructional objectives into discrete units and subunits. Collins (1983), Raimes (1983), and Tumposky (1984) argue that this attempt to break complex phenomena into discrete, standardized concepts and skills amounts to reductionism, in which the sum of the parts does not equal the essence of the whole. Just as occupational competence cannot be equated with mastery of overt behaviors, linguistic competence cannot be achieved through mastery of isolated building blocks of language. In language learning, this focus

on countable, identifiable, and observable phenomena has resulted in a stress on assembling rather than on creating (Raimes, 1983). Although the units in CBAE/ESL are not units of language but of behavior, the same criticism holds. As one of the teachers I interviewed said, the result of the focus on a bottom-up, building-block pedagogy may produce such a narrow dissection into subunits that students cannot see the forest for the trees (Auerbach, 1985).

Prespecified Outcomes

The emphasis on observable outcomes in CBE further limits the possibility for critical thinking. Price and Montgomery (1985) attack the "reductionist insistence that outcomes be translated into observable behavior, for we know that much learning cannot be observed" (p. 40). Tumposky (1984) cites two ways in which a behaviorist mode of prespecifying outcomes inhibits learning. The first is in downplaying the significance of the unpredictable: "Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioral outcomes of the students unpredictable" (Stenhouse, quoted in Candlin, 1984, p. 33). The focus on results obscures the complexity and dynamism inherent in effective teaching and may thus constrain the process itself. Second, the concern with "getting there" overshadows divergent thinking or discovery learning. If ends are clarified before means are selected, creativity and innovation may be stifled (Tumposky, 1984). Although the Center for Applied Linguistics (1983, p. 12) argues that CBAE/ESL is effective because it diminishes the possibility of getting sidetracked, this kind of highly contextualized, situationally responsible teaching may be precisely what is most effective. With CBAE, teachers report feeling "guilty" about animated class discussions which are unrelated to the target competency (Auerbach, 1985).

Continuous Assessment Through Demonstrated Mastery

A further critique is that the emphasis on mastery learning and measurement in CBAE precludes emphasis on critical thinking. The CBAE assessment process itself dictates a focus on lower order skills, since measuring critical thinking skills or creativity is more difficult and less amenable to quantification: "Skills and discrete facts are easy to give out in controlled doses. And it is certainly easier to enforce the learning of a skill than it is to check whether someone has 'gotten to know' an idea" (Papert, 1980, p. 136).

Critics also question the notion that assessment can or should be objective. Aoki (1984) criticizes the value attached to empirical data: "The harder they are, the better, and the more objective they are, the better. Data ... are seen as brute facts which are considered objective, carrying the dignity of value-free neutrality, reducing out ... contamination by the subjectivity of the knower" (p. 8). However, as teachers are quick to point out, the assessment process is in reality often subjective; decisions about the acceptability of student responses in tests can be arbitrary. One teacher told the story of a student who failed a menu-planning competency because the assessor considered the foods which the student selected inappropriate, even though the right proportions of healthy foods and the right number of calories was included. The teacher's comment was, "There's an illusion that by calling something competency based you're removing your own prejudices from the processes of teaching and assessing — and that is a dangerous illusion" (Auerbach, 1985).

Unfortunately, as Collins (1983) points out, it is this "false aura of exactness which imparts authority to competency-based systems" (p. 175). Aoki (1984) argues that the real reason for concern with quantification is the need for control: "Evaluators who subscribe to the ends-means view are technologically oriented, primarily interested in seeing how well the system is able to control components within the system as it struggles to achieve its goals" (p. 8). Teachers complain that the need to meet funders' demands for measurable outcomes controls every curriculum decision. The result is that teachers and program directors feel compelled to follow that model to satisfy funding dictates: "The reason we're adhering to CBAE is not because it's educationally sound, but because it sells" (Auerbach, 1985).

Further, the focus on mastery learning may be incompatible with second language acquisition. If mastery learning emphasizes precision and right/wrong answers and if language learning necessitates risk taking and a willingness to make mistakes, CBAE/ESL may be sending students a mixed message. The very nature of language is creative and unpredictable; learning a language involves not the successive acquisition of discrete forms (grammatical, functional, or behavioral), but progressive approximations. Thus, the stress on mastery, while satisfying the demands for accountability, may be pedagogically

counterproductive. Administrative concerns (including the record keeping that goes with testing) may become so time-consuming that they seriously detract from teaching; as one teacher said, "If you spend all your time assessing and filling out forms, when do you work on developing your methodology?" (Auerbach, 1985).

Individualized, Student-Centered Instruction

Critics also challenge the claim that CBAE is student centered. In the CBAE model, students are screened for their needs and interests, and a curriculum is designed on the basis of this a priori needs assessment. One criticism is that the needs assessment process itself takes control of learning out of students' hands.

At present, there seem to be two extremes on the needs-assessment continuum. At one end is an extensive informa[illegible] gathering process which includes interviews, [illegible]estionnaires, and placement tests prior to instruction. For example, the *Handbook for CBAE Staff Development* (Tibbetts & Westby-Gibson, 1983), developed at the Center for Adult Education at San Francisco State University, suggests asking new students about goals, reasons for entering the program, educational background, interests, and special needs, as well as testing for language and basic skills. This investigation process itself may be intimidating for students, particularly those with questionable legal status. At the other end of the spectrum are programs which rely primarily on standardized competency lists drawn from the APL and other published materials. One Boston program, for example, has reduced its curriculum to a set of 18 competencies for all classes (Auerbach, 1985). In between these two extremes are programs which give students a menu of competencies grown from organic interaction between students and instructor, out of a process in which needs are identified collaboratively as a **result** of accumulated trust and experience, as an integral part of learning, rather than as a **precondition** for instruction. Corder (1967) has made the point that only through classroom interaction itself can we discover the learner's "built-in syllabus" and "allow the learner's innate strategies to dictate our practice and determine our syllabus. We may learn to adapt ourselves to his needs rather than impose upon him our preconceptions of how he ought to learn, what he ought to learn" (p. 170).

Teachers argue that they face a built-in contradiction in trying to implement the aims of CBAE: The curriculum must be both static and dynamic at the same time. It must be static in that outcomes are predetermined, but it must by dynamic in its ability to respond to student demands. Teachers themselves get this mixed message from funding agencies, which on the one hand impose standardized curricula and then instruct teachers to be flexible about using them (Auerbach, 1985).

A second question regarding the student-centered nature of the CBAE concerns the ways in which cultural differences are taken into account. Rosen (cited in 1984) points to five key assumptions in CBAE which themselves may be culture-specific: the stress on intentionality, or goal orientation; the concern with measurement; the notion of self-directed learning; the importance of individuality; and the concern with variety in instruction. While proponenets of CBAE stress that cultural differences must be recognized, the issue is **how** they are handled: Are teachers' norms taken as given, or are cultural differences considered a legitimate subject for negotiation and exploration in the classroom?

An examination of individualization in CBAE sheds light on this issue. Tibbetts and Westby-Gibson (1983) identify a potential cultural conflict raised by individualization; they assert that students must be taught why individualizing is necessary so that they do not become confused if they are separated from classmates. The authors advise clarifying any "misunderstanding" early so that it does not become a "recurring management problem" (p. M-25) and suggest that students be familiarized with how one goes about learning in a CBAE mode. Thus, even before a program begins, one culture-specific aspect of curriculum is presupposed, with student resistance to this mode seen as an obstacle to be overcome.

In fact it can be argued that individualizing is contrary to students' survival and language learning needs. One of the strongest resources newcomers have in an alien society is collectivity; powerless people are empowered not by acting in isolation, but by pooling resources, developing strategies together, and learning from each other. Interactive learning—hypothesizing, testing, comparing experiences, and refining ideas together—helps to develop critical thinking. As one of the teachers I interviewed said, "The stress on individualizing in CBAE subverts the group process" (Auerbach, 1985). If the classroom is to prepare students for action in the real world, then perhaps the emphasis

should be on encouraging students to work together more.

Further, the **content** of instruction about American culture may disregard the tenets of student-centered learning. On the one hand, CBAE suggests focusing on those skills which students **lack.** On the other, adult learning theory stresses seeing adults as people with a lifetime of experience and strengths which can be utilized in teaching. ESL students come to learning with a wealth of cultural knowledge and skills in dealing with the complex problems of war, flight, and survival in refugee camps and in the United States. However, few CBAE/ESL texts systematically elicit student contributions about their own culture, experience, or attitudes (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985), thus ignoring one of the most important contributions of schema theory—that comprehension results from the interaction of prior knowledge and new information (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). The focus instead is on transmitting information about American ways of doing things in the form of lists, readings, or formulas for verbal interaction.

Again, it is informative to put this tendency into a historical context. In the early 1900s, ESL instruction was concerned with Americanizing students; texts specified "American" ways of doing household tasks:

> The immigrant learned as a result that there was an American way to brush his teeth, and an American way to clean his fingernails, and an American way to air out his bedding. Becoming an American, immigrants were taught, involved making yourself over entirely. In a sense, it required immigrants to become children again in order to learn the ABC's of culture. (McClymer, 1982, p. 111)

One ESL program defined its goals as "to carry the English language and American ways of caring for babies, ventilating the house, preparing American vegetables, instead of the inevitable cabbage, right into the new houses" (McClymer, 1982, p. 110).

How different, in practice, is this view from CBAE/ESL texts which tell students to floss their teeth, use bug spray and deodorant, keep the stove and sink clean, close garbage bags, and vacuum the rugs(Walsh, 1984, p. 59)? Implicitly, this kind of curriculum supports a process of acculturation in which one set of norms is superimposed on another, rather than a selective process of integrating the old and the new. When the focus of instruction is on behaviors that students lack, there is a danger that the possibility for making critical choices will be subverted.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of CBAE/ESL takes many forms. In some cases, it is a total system in which "all teaching and learning activities are related to the development of specific competencies and anything not related has no valid claim for being included in the curriculum" (Hertling, 1981, p. 2). This **systems** model involves research-based identification of skills, standardization of curriculum options, packaging and delivery of curriculum content, and systematic assessment with a view toward accountability. The CASAS consortium has incorporated computerized data management, curriculum management, and item bank management to streamline the systematization process in California.

Others see in CBAE/ESL primarily the potential for a humanistic, student-centered curriculum which stresses learner-generated content, including both language competencies and language skills; the immediate usefulness of instruction to students; and the role of the teacher as facilitator rather than as transmitter of information (Berg & Schwartz, 1981). They argue that critical thinking can be developed in a competency-based approach through critical thinking competencies. The teachers whom I interviewed see many of these positive aspects to the CBAE approach: They believe it encourages teachers to focus more clearly on lesson objectives (Auerbach, 1985). Some argued that they could mold critical thinking skills into competency formats so that there was an empowerment component to their curricula.

The question that we face is which aspect of CBAE has become dominant in practice: Is it the concern with accountability, management, quantification, and the production of outcomes, or is it the concern with empowering students to determine and meet their own goals? Results from the Boston survey (Auerbach, 1985) suggest that CBAE practitioners are torn between the pulls of these two tendencies and that increasingly, the constraints imposed by the systems aspect of CBAE (the needs of administrators and funders) are undermining its humanistic aspect. When teaching to competencies becomes an end in itself, students and teacher become the objects rather than the subjects of the educational process.

Do the critiques of CBAE/ESL discussed in this article mean that we need to get rid of competencies? My own view is that we need to make a clear distinction between *competency-based systems*, in which competencies are the starting and ending point of curriculum development, and **competencies as tools**, in which competencies are one tool among many in the process of enabling students to act for change in their lives.

Rather than promoting the acquisition of prespecified behaviors as the central goal, we need to develop a model which begins with problematized aspects of reality, promotes critical reflection on that reality, and incorporates competencies as a means for taking action. In this model, teachers and students determine jointly what skills are needed to shape or influence reality; competencies become tools **in service of** a transformative education, rather than a constraining framework for instruction.

What is important now, however, is not to promote one view—whether to embrace or to reject competency-based education—but to engage in informed debate: If critical thinking is to be a goal for our students, it must be a goal for us as educators in the same way.

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A Tale of Three Cities: A Comparative Look at Adult Literacy Programs in Stockholm, London and Boston

by Ruth S. Nickse, Ph.D.

Explanatory Note

This article contains Sections 5 and 6 of a larger report *"A Tale of Three Cities: A Comparative Look at Adult Literacy Programs in Stockholm, London, and Boston,"* by Ruth S. Nickse, Ph.D. The larger report contains the following main sections:

1. Components of an effective adult literacy program: results of the national adult literacy project.
2. Adult literacy program in Stockholm.
3. Adult literacy program in London.
4. Adult literacy program in Boston.
5. Discussion (included here).
6. Recommendations (included here).

Note: The full 90-page monograph is available from the author. Please send $5.00 to cover costs of a reproduction and mailing to: Dr. Ruth S. Nickse, School of Education, Boston University, 605 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215.

"Unless there is the intention to open more than the printed page to literacy learners, the skills (they learn) are a route to a dead end."
Carmen St. John Hunter (Miller, 1986)

This comparative study is an effort to identify common issues and concerns, strengths and weaknesses of adult literacy programs in three different countries within the framework of a recently completed study (Lerche, 1985) which identifies effective adult literacy practices in a large sample of programs in the USA. It thus adds to our information and understanding of literacy work internationally. It differs from work done by UNESCO for example (UNESCO, 1983) because it studies, not third world adult literacy efforts, but those in three world-class cities in three western countries, each with a history of compulsory schooling. The phenomenon of the extent of adult illiteracy in these countries has only been slowly recognized, except in England where a national awareness campaign developed into a ten-year effort to improve adult literacy, an effort which has no visible end in sight.

Each of the study cities, Stockholm, London, and Boston, is a capital city and an educational and financial center. Each has a proportion of native-born adults who are unable to speak or read the language of the country and are in need of literacy services. Additionally, each has a population of "guest workers" and others unfamiliar with the predominant culture and language due to a recent and continuing influx of political refugees, displaced persons, and immigrants, who have been drawn to the countries seeking new opportunities and a fresh start. Each has a municipal adult basic education or literacy program and is delivering basic skills instruction to adults.

Within this framework of similarities, then, the investigation asks, are program characteristics similar? For example, are the administrative structures, program goals, instructional content, methods of instruction, staff hiring and training practices, recruitment and retention of students, and student and program evaluation similar or different? Are the adults served similar demographically, and in their level of reading skills, professed goals, and rate of achievement? Are there similar issues and concerns or are programs so dissimilar that a casual visitor, perhaps a literacy student, an ABE teacher or a program administrator would feel oddly out-of-place?

The investigator, through a variety of methods (interviews with ABE teachers, administrators, students, classroom site observations; and reading background reports) gathered data in an effort to see if policies and practices known to be effective in the USA might be applicable to, or the same as, practices and policies in Stockholm, Sweden and in London, England.

The following discussion interprets the data given in Sections 1-4 of this paper. It also makes some recommendations of a very practical nature, and describes some excellent practices in each city that might well transport across national boundaries and strengthen each adult literacy program.

PROGRAM CONTEXT

Nature of the need for adult literacy programs

Stockholm, London, and Boston are a traveller's dream: these are exciting and beautiful cities, with distinctive personalities. And they are alike in several ways mentioned previously: capital cities, leaders in their countries cultures and in the history of the western world, proud of their names in the history books, and of their roles in the lives of their citizens.

From the point of view of an adult educator one thing they also share is the impact of recent immigration, which is making great demands on each city's services in areas of housing, education, employment and in the social and cultural fabric of the city, all factors which contribute to, or impact on, the design and delivery of effective adult literacy programs.

There are additional factors which are common to all. Not surprisingly, each program is driven in some way by the employment needs and the labor market of the city in which it is located. In each city the poorly skilled are left out of the labor market or must be content with no employment, or low-level or underemployment. This is true whether the economy of the particular city is booming, as in Boston, or in trouble, as in Stockholm and in London. In Boston, the justification for ABE is to improve the literacy skills to enable students to compete for jobs in areas where there is a need, namely high technology. In Stockholm, there is a need to improve literacy skills among immigrant populations because lack of the Swedish language prevents job attainment and promotion; in London, with its high level of unemployment, those without skills have no chance for a job unless their skills improve.

Nature of the populations served

Each city estimates that thousands of adults are in need of literacy services, whether adult basic skills or second language instruction. The nature of the populations served by ABE is similar in that they are mostly the poor, the unemployed, the poorly educated, the marginal citizen, the voiceless and the left out in each city. Program staffs at the sites have shared worries about the populations they serve with so much care and dedication; in Stockholm, London and Boston there is concern about preparing the adult learners to fit into the city's labor pool needs, to help them integrate better into the predominent society, or to learn the skills necessary to change that society. Each program operates under official or unofficial mandates to teach worthwhile skills to enable undereducated adults to better their lot.

Nature of the programs' limitations

Yet all of the staffs, without exception, are not so naive to think that learning how to read is the simple educational solution to what is essentially a complicated and severe social problem in each city. Irrespective of the particular form of local and national government under which programs operate, the staffs live with the fact that they are working in a marginal area of education. Each is aware and complains about limited financial and human resources, of "burn-out," and of dispair. And at each site there are exciting and excited staff, loving their work, willing to put in long unpaid hours, working under some rather appalling physical conditions, sometimes with no materials or the most meagre, patiently teaching adults to read. The author is often touched and overwhelmed by the dedication and concern of those who make the commitment to this job. Lerche (1985) also observes in the USA sample this dedication and commitment, as well as the existence of severe

obstacles encountered by the staffs in their work, which, she adds, is true of all the programs in that study.

Nature of the programs

Each of the programs visited considers that it has limited financial and human resources, and of course, this is true. The specific situations are relative, however, and in comparing the three cities, it seems clear that Stockholm has the biggest need for more, or at least some different, resources. Its needs are outlined in the practice profile and in the section on issues and concerns.

Each of the programs operates under a mandate to provide services, but there is a difference in focus, and each operates in a different climate of support. In Stockholm, the literacy program is mandated by the national government, and is embedded locally in the municipal public schools which operate the program on the local level. ABE takes a secondary role in this larger framework, because of the current proportionally low number of ABE students in the program in Stockholm. Yet the number of lessons generated in ABE are almost a quarter of all lessons given in adult education in the city. In economic terms, ABE is receiving its share of resources, yet is is clear that these need to better fit the current program focus, which is almost entirely the teaching of Swedish-as-a-Second Language. In terms of the political support and climate for ABE, it seems a marginal program of vital importance to many of those who teach in it, but of secondary importance in political and social policy. Would its status be the same if the predominent participants were Swedes instead of immigrants?

In London, ABE is not legislated, but a program of choice for the ILEA. The adult education effort, of which the CBAEI is a part, is embedded in the general educational offerings of the city of London, and is dependent on the city for its financial support. It enjoys strong political support also and its work is recognized and valued in the community. The ILEA provides not only adequate material resources (as compared to Stockholm) but also a climate of psychological support for literacy work that is missing at present in Stockholm.

The Adult Literacy Initiative (ALI) effort in Boston is a new one compared to its counterparts. It is neither mandated by the state or the city which supports it, but is a rather unique creation formed by cooperation between city agencies, and is not a program of the municipal educational system. Thus it is free from school bureaucracy, and answers to a different set of constraints and administrative edicts, namely, literacy in the service of employment. This is not necessarily a handicap, and may even be an asset; it is a different organizing structure than that of Stockholm and London, perhaps more like the job training efforts in both these cities.

In terms of its political support and the climate within which it operates, ALI is breaking new ground. It has steadily increased its acceptance within its main administrative network, and is beginning to entrench itself as a reliable part of the citys' adult basic education offerings. Its relationship to the municipal adult basic education program run by the Boston Public School Department is unclear, although through its external diploma program, it enjoys BPS support. The staff development programs run by the Adult Literacy Resource Institute provide a much-needed assist to adult basic education teachers and are a definite asset to the improvement of the quality of literacy services in the city.

The ABE program structures in each city vary according to the contexts. The ways that each program identifies its formal and informal goals, schedules classes, selects and trains staff, and finances its operations have been noted with some detail in its program and practice profiles.

The next section compares the three programs on the eight program components identified in the NALP study, and relates the data to those findings.

COMPONENT A: RECRUITMENT

Stockholm, London and Boston all recruit in a similar fashion, using a variety of print and media methods to attract students, and with more or less success; each comments that recruitment is a year round activity; and each has trouble reaching a desired segment of the population.

The programs surveyed in the NALP study that have successful recruitment programs work hard to attract students whose goals and expectations can be met through participation in the programs, and use recruitment messages that are explicit about their programs' goals, the intended outcomes and the requirements for learners. Some call this targeting of recruitment "creaming," others call it sensible program management, because programs select those they can help and refer those who they cannot to other programs that can help them (Lerche, 1985).

There are factors that impact on recruitment in this

comparative study which are not mentioned prominently in the NALP report. Among these are the age of the programs and the perceptions about them held by others (their "image") in their cities. These factors relate to recruitment effectiveness, regardless of current programs' foci.

London's CBAEI is the oldest of the programs and has been in operation since the mid 1930's; Stockholm's program has been in effect since 1978, and Boston's ALI is the newest, in operation in its present form only since 1983. Since word-of-mouth is the most reliable, but is the slowest form of recruitment, age is a program asset. It gives programs time to build trust, and to entrench themselves in the community, and London's program has an edge here.

Program "image" also affects recruitment, and the development of a constituency of support from the community and students is an important by-product. In Stockholm, the ABE program is perceived by Swedes who may themselves be in need of literacy services as a program for immigrants, and this perception makes their recruitment a problem. In London, the prevailing image of ABE is "the place where all you do is write." Admittedly, this is a large component of the program agenda, but it is not solely the content offering or goal. In Boston, the programs' expressed goals are primarily job attainment and this focus shapes the community perception of the ALI's intent. What is important here is the accuracy of the image, and whether or not it affects program recruitment and students' expectations. It is evident that each of the programs studied wishes to improve its recruitment, and to broaden and extend its service to the population.

In Stockholm, those in need of recruitment are Swedes in need of Swedish literacy; in London, it is that segment of the population with the weakest academic skills; in Boston, where there are long waiting lists, it's not better recruitment that is needed, but more programs in general, particularly for the 0-4 grade level adult.

The general question here seems to be how can programs reach their recruitment goals, whatever they may be? Answers are incomplete and probably obvious to all programs, but might include changing their recruitment approach (for London), changing their image (for Stockholm), and enlarging their service (for Boston).

COMPONENT B: ORIENTATION

Each program studied has some form of student orientation and considers it important. Yet they differ a bit in their effectiveness and their satisfaction with this component. In Stockholm, the intent is to provide very individual services to each student, yet the rolling admissions policy seems to mitigate against this being done as carefully as staff would wish, and the lack of enough speakers and interpreters of the students' home languages also is a barrier. These facts are well recognized by the staff, but until this aspect of service is improved, orientation will continue to be troublesome.

In London at the CBAEI, orientation is done by teachers at special times set aside for students before and during registration. While no one expressed that this method is unsatisfactory, the number of staff available to do this is small, and it taxes them in time even if they are paid for this over and above their paid instructional time. In Boston, the funder considers orientation an important element in the delivery of service; beyond stating this fact and expressing that it be well done, programs have freedom to design this as best fits their staff and their program designs.

Each of the programs tries hard to design the orientation phase to calm adult students' fears of failure and tries to convey a message of caring and valuing of the student. In this focus, the programs studied here are no different from those in the NALP study.

COMPONENT C: COUNSELING

There is agreement among programs that counseling is important in giving sound instructional services to adults. Again, practice varies according to resources and commitment to this aspect of program delivery. For example, Stockholm is aware that its counseling services are far short of ideal and, in fact, are completely inadequate. Not only are there too few counselors, they are not trained to counsel adults, cannot speak any language except Swedish, and are completely overwhelmed with current workloads. An informant mentioned that the ABE teachers themselves needed and seek counseling because of the stress of their jobs and the effort involved in delivering services and meeting expectations with meager resources.

In London, counseling is part of the teacher's daily responsibility. There was some concern voiced about teachers doing this well considering their other responsibilities, and an ALBSU report lists counseling as a major area for improvement in all literacy programs.

The ALI programs in Boston are required "to make counseling available for their students aside from classroom instruction." In fact, program data seem to note a variety of types of counseling available, a range more extensive than that asked by the funder. For the funder, the primary focus of counseling is vocational (career exploration, assessment and goals definition). While job placement is optional, "all counselors are expected to work closely with the Boston Job Exchange, job developers, and JCS Neighborhood case mangers."

Acknowledgement of the need for counseling support for students to be successful in achieving their personal, vocational and academic goals is common to literacy programs in the NALP study. It is clear that staff counterparts in Stockholm, London and Boston are in essential agreement with its importance, but are more or less able to provide these services in the manner they would wish, depending mostly on economic considerations.

COMPONENT D: DIAGNOSTIC TESTING/ ASSESSMENT

Each program has some form of diagnosis and assessment step as part of its overall program design and each recognises its importance, but there is variation both in its emphasis and how it is managed. Principally, the chief difference is not program specific, but societally and educationally specific, and related to institutionalized attitudes about tests and testing in general. Sweden allows no standardized testing in schools, and the use of formal tests in England is much less accepted than in the USA. There are historical as well as philosophical reasons for this difference which are beyond the scope of this paper; practices differ in ABE as a result of this wider framework.

Boston uses various combinations of standardized and informal/locally developed tests, while Stockholm and London use informal types of diagnosis and assessment. But the intent of all progams is the same, that is, to place the student in the correct instructional phase of the programs where success is best ensured, and to evaluate the effects of instruction when the student is nearing or has attained his or her goals.

Both the Stockholm and London staffs mention that their informal methods are perhaps non-threatening and student-centered in their administration, but "do not tell them much about student progress." For the London CBAEI, assessment is when the students "move on," indicating that the students decide when they feel confident to pass along into next steps. This informality would not satisfy the more rigorous requirements of the Boston programs, which are held to specific performance standards and must document student progress.

In general, American ABE programs studied use tests but administrators and staff alike express ambivalence about many of the tests they currently administer (Lerche, 1985). This particular program component then differs not so much in intent, but more in practice in Stockholm and London than in Boston.

COMPONENT E: INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Each program is an adult literacy or basic skills program, but within that most general framework certainly there are differences in program goals, both formal and informal. For the investigator, the formal though not written goals are: Stockholm—integration of students into Swedish culture; London—a humanistic relationship of teacher and students and empowerment of students; Boston—program accountability and ultimately, jobs for students.

Within the context of instructional goals, however, there may be fewer differences between programs. Each teaches reading and writing, grammar and spelling, and elementary arithmetic. Each has students with mixed abilities grouped together for instruction. How they structure the instructional experience is also similar, since each is essentially a classroom based program. Significant differences occur in several areas: in teacher-student ratio; in philosophies about, and techniques of, instruction; in emphasis on curriculum content; and in the kind of, and frequency, with which records are kept.

The teacher-student ratio is less an artifact of what is desirable, and more one of economics. London's ratio is the lowest, with 1 to 8 a target. In fact, with a teacher and several volunteers and aides providing services to as few as eight students at a time, the usual ratios are even lower. This is deliberate, and a goal for CBAEI, one that other programs might envy.

Boston's target ratio is 1 teacher to 12 students, though this may vary in either direction; volunteers in classrooms may improve the ratio in some instances. Stockholm's ratio is currently 1 to 9; but this is not augmented by volunteers, since they are not used at all.

Because a competency-based management system is mandated in Boston, an integrated approach to diagnosis, instruction, and assessment is presumed by the funder, and deliberate efforts are made to coordinate aspects of the educational phases for each student, and for the program as a whole. Just how effectively this works in the classroom is part of the investigator's interest in visiting sites; certainly the programs' literature makes such coordination a strong focus.

And what of Stockholm and London? Stockholm's staff have no particular plan for instruction, and many decry its absence. Especially since teachers are both untrained in ABE and in teaching Swedish-as-a-Second Language, which is their primary focus, many teachers are bewildered about where to begin and what to teach. Thus, teaching is a very idiosyncratic activity, with few teachers agreeing on classroom procedures or sharing successful techniques. Many teachers remarked that they felt at a loss to know how best to approach planning and implementing instruction. What was observed in classrooms is a lot of individualized attention, with students seated doing worksheets with staff nearby to help explain and guide efforts. Language barriers prevent a lot of discussion.

In London, the focus is on writing as the critical element in students' progress. It is considered to constitute the foundation of other skills and is directly connected to the improvement of literacy through the efforts of writing and reading of one's and others' work. This focus directs much of classroom time, and shapes instructional techniques as well. After years of experimenting with one-on-one literacy tutoring which was the heart of instruction in the beginning years of the national adult literacy campaign, instruction is now organized in small groups, with the students' social contact considered an absolutely critical element in the support of academic learning.

But the author's classroom observation revealed that pre-planned individual work is a large part of classroom activity, and that, in addition, much emphasis is put on discussion, which is carefully structured by the classroom teacher. (The author could not fail to note the similarity in techniques that she had seen in primary schools in Oxfordshire in the early 1970's used to promote language in the open classroom movement.)

COMPONENT F: INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The materials in use in classrooms in the Stockholm and London ABE sites vary quite dramatically. Although each professes to need more, the need in Stockholm is extreme, primarily because there is little available to help teachers to do their task, which is to teach Swedish to immigrants. The dearth of materials is a barrier to good teaching, and hinders the students in making progress. According to an informant the lack of materials is due to the fact that the demand, although very real and urgent from the teachers' viewpoint, is small according to the publishers of materials, and therefore not viable commercially. This leaves the teachers two choices: make their own materials for teaching Swedish-as-a-Second language or use childrens' materials. Unfortunately, many teachers are unaware of the potentially demeaning aspect of using childrens' materials with adult students, and others use them knowingly, out of desperation. Regardless of how serious about their work and effective the teachers are, the lack of materials with which to teach is a serious impediment.

In London, the lack of adequate materials has been a problem in the past. Now it is not so much the lack of materials, for the sites seem well provisioned or at least can hunt up materials somewhere in the city, but the need to increase the amount available and the variety. Due to the considerable emphasis on student writing, the store of useful, attractive, and inherently interesting material has grown, as a result of a focus, not only on the production of writing as a step towards increased self-esteem and literacy, but also as a result of encouraging the student-as-publisher.

The CBAEI has the facilities for writing development projects, which help ABE students get into print. Equipment such as an electronic typewriter, stencils, headliners, electric staples, and duplicating machines which can handle photo duplication are available for students to use in producing soft cover books. Students with a particular bent for illustration help in producing attractive, interesting and easy-to-read materials. Of particular delight to the author is an Afro-Caribbean cookbook, a group project, full of humor and wonderful family recipes.

There are many such books available. One author, a man in his 70's, proudly announced that his book about his childhood in England had sold over 300 copies! Students are accustomed to reading work produced by their peers, and view being published

as a logical extension of their writing. Stockholm's and Boston's programs might be encouraged to try what appears to be a very successful approach to teaching literacy and at the same time, filling the need for appropriate materials.

COMPONENT G: FOLLOW-UP

This section is necessarily brief, because, although each program thinks this an important activity, none really does it. Reasons given are the same as those given in the NALP study: too few staff, too little time, too difficult to organize and carry out in any coherent way. As well, there is a feeling that students might be difficult to locate because of their mobility, and that they might be reluctant to participate. An unsaid, but perhaps additional factor, is that formal follow-ups might confront programs with their own failures to markedly change the lives of the majority of students, which might be construed as a programmatic, rather than more properly, a societal failure.

COMPONENT H: EVALUATION

Again, programs in this study feel that they are weak in the area of program evaluation, and each admits it could be improved. As in other aspects of this comparison, how well they do when compared to one another is relative. Stockholm has a strict termination policy related to its student stipends, so ABE program completion is counted in numbers of hours, rather than skill levels attained. It's a good measure of the number of lessons, but leaves some questions about program effectiveness. The feeling is, and this was corroborated by an informal survey (Modee, 1985), that the ABE program has very little impact. A more formal study might bring different results.

Boston has perhaps the tightest rein on its programs; accountability is seen to serve the adult students as well as the funders by mandating a clear management plan for helping students achieve their own goals. Frequent reporting on progress is collected, and the results are automated and returned to sites for their validation. This approach is consistent with the goals of the program and with its program design. Yearly evaluations are made easier by the amount of data collected, even though programs may complain about the time it takes.

London's CBAEI program admits that evaluation is a weakness. Any plan for formal evaluation would have to account for a variety of affective and academic dimensions, one senses, to accurately portray program impact on students, from the staff's perspective. Charnely and Jones suggest the complexity of this task in their book on defining success in adult literacy programs. As has been noted, NALP projects studied have lots of real concerns about evaluation too; lack of time, training, and relevance, and other problems inherent in obtaining an accurate picture of program effectiveness are mentioned in that study.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS:

In studying ABE programs and listing the facts as they are observed or reported by informants, one is apt to get bogged down in details. In doing a piece of cross-cultural comparison, the trick is to try to understand not only the programs and how they operate, but also something of the values that they transmit, the unspoken, but important philosophies that guide the work.

In a recent article Podeschi (1986) argues that to understand adult education in the United States, one must understand how different philosophies connect, or do not connect, to American mainstream values. Without repeating the arguments, he maintains that clusters of values, largely unquestioned and uncritically accepted, drive adult education program methodologies. He mentions, as examples of one cluster, values which include practicality, efficiency, productivity, measureability and technology, and illustrates in an accompanying chart, that these values can be associated with both behaviorist and humanistic philosophies of adult education.

This thought should be kept in mind when the results of the NALP study are discussed, and when its results become the template against which programs in Stockholm and London are reviewed. The ABE programs studied there may be excellent examples of prevailing adult education values and philosophies of their countries, and may bear little relationship to those which characterize programs examined in the NALP study or of this study's USA example, Boston.

The NALP study (Lerche, 1985) concludes with nine observations about adult literacy programs that it studied. Successful programs have these characteristics;

(A) They are clear about their overall goals of instruction.

(B) They are clear about their overall philosophy of instruction.

(C) They develop measurable goals for every component of the program so that they can monitor success in meeting these goals.

(D) They assist potential learners in determining if the program is well-suited to the learners' goals and expectations.

(E) They are explicit about intended learning outcomes and share standards with program participants.

(F) They diagnose learners' needs and develop an individual plan for each student.

(G) They tie learning objectives to instructional methods and materials and to assessment strategies.

(H) They provide frequent feedback to learners on their progress with documentation.

(I) They frequently evaluate program effectiveness and use these data to improve their programs.

Without belaboring this analysis, how do the programs in Stockholm, London and Boston measure up to these criteria? This is indicated on the following Table where, it should be emphasized, the impressions are subject to the disclaimers noted above.

Table. Impressions of the successful program characteristics listed above as achieved by the literacy programs in Stockholm, London and Boston

	Stockholm	London	Boston
A (overall goals)	inadequate	*	*
B (philosophy of instruction)	inadaquate	adequate	*
C (measurable goals)	*	*	*
D (program match)	adequate	adequate	*
E (explicit outcomes and standards)	inadaquate	*	*
F (individual learning plan)	adequate	adequate	*
G (instructional strategy)	*	*	*
H (feedback)	adequate	adequate	*
I (evaluation and revision)	inadequate	*	*

* indicates not determined

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that each of the programs in this study has elements of program design that are effective and that could be considered for adoption across national boundaries. The similarities between programs seem, on the whole, to outweigh the differences. For example, the nature of the populations served by these ABE or literacy programs are similar enough, the administrative structures similar enough, and the staffs concerned and dedicated enough, to consider adapting several of these suggestions, assuming the resources become available and that each can provide technical assistance to the other. If this becomes possible, what would each teach and learn from the others?

STOCKHOLM

1.) Staffs in Stockholm can teach their counterparts in London and Boston how to use the format of study circles as a means of staff development in adult basic education; they can recommend how to design and implement this most famous, successful, and one of the oldest forms of adult education for use in creating forums for discussion of adult basic education practices.

2.) Staffs in Stockholm could learn from Boston how to develop a more structured management system for the teaching of Swedish-as-a-Second Language; and from London, how to develop a writing program that would make ABE instruction more participatory and less dependent on workbooks and childrens' materials. At the same

time they would learn how to produce materials that would help students record their own culture as they learn the language of their new country.

3.) Stockholm could learn from both London and Boston the importance of outreach workers.

4.) Stockholm could learn from both London and Boston how to develop a center for providing technical assistance to staffs of adult basic education programs such as that in London (ALBSU) and in Boston (ALRI)

5.) While the concept of volunteer workers is not appropriate in the context of Swedish society, Stockholm should recognize that volunteers, as used in both the London and Boston programs, can reduce the ratio of teachers to students and increase the amount of personal attention to learners that is so important to their program, yet so expensive without the use of volunteers.

6.) Stockholm might change its image and attract more Swedes to adult basic education if it were able to consider some form of literacy instruction for Swedes other than that now available. Perhaps some kind of informal, community-based program such as a drop-in center in a library or such site in downtown Stockholm would be more effective.

LONDON

1.) London might teach both Stockholm and Boston how to organize a strong writing program that would enhance the developing literacy skills and the emerging self-confidence of the learners in their programs, while adding to their store of appropriate materials.

2.) London might also teach both Stockholm and Boston about the do's and don'ts of a national adult literacy campaign, should either country begin to make such plans.

3.) London could teach Stockholm about the value of student support services that include childcare for the children of adults attending instruction.

4.) London might teach Stockholm an effective design for in-service that would fill their urgent need.

5.) London might learn from Boston that an organized set of learning objectives can also accommodate a humanistic approach to instruction and assessment.

BOSTON

1.) Boston could teach both Stockholm and London that an integrated approach to the design of an instructional management system is effective in organizing service delivery and is also humanistic in its approach.

2.) Boston could help Stockholm with the design of a technical resource center to provide library services and in-service technical assistance for teachers.

3.) Boston could learn from London much about how to create student writing programs that might speed the development of both literacy and job skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Without the presence of the key informants from Stockholm, London and Boston to correct the author's understanding (or misunderstanding!), these recommendations for program improvements seem both feasible and attractive, if not terribly inspired. Yet, sometimes the obvious is not clear unless one has the opportunity to view each program on-site, as has been this investigator's privilege, and to admire and encourage the sharing of effective practices across national borders.

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Note: A number of acronyms were used in this article which people may not be familiar with, here are some of them:

1) ILEA — Inner London Education Authority
2) CBAEI — Clapham-Battersea Adult Educational Institute
3) NALP — National Adult Literacy Project
4) ALBSU — Adult Literacy Basic Skills Unit

Author Biography

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She was the original Project Director for the design and implementation of the first adult external diploma program, the New York State External High School Program; a consultant for five years in the Bureau of Student, Community and Adult Services, Massachusetts Department of Education; an instructor at SUNY Cortland, University of Massachusetts in Boston and Harvard Extension; and an Educational Policy Fellow at the National Institute of Education.

She has published two books, *Assessing Life Skills Competence: The New York State External High School Diploma Program* (Pitman, 1980); and *Competency-Based Education: Beyond Minimum Competency Testing* (Teachers' College Press, 1981) and written numerous articles on competency-based education and adult basic education. Her current research interests are in the area of international adult basic education and literacy.

The Education Part of Basic Education

by Judy Hikes

This paper is about teaching strategies for a class of adults reading at Grade levels 4-8. It is a difficult level to teach and one in which many people get stuck. In many ways it's the "make it or break it" level: People who reach Grade level 8 usually go on to get their GED's, but some people take years to reach level 8. They often get discouraged and quit. The hurdles students face at this level can be formidable. A description of the difficulties and of how I chose to address them are the subject of this paper.

At Grade 4 level people have learned to decode and to read about familiar subjects; their next step is to learn how to read to learn new things. It's a new way of learning as well as a higher level of reading; both are demanding and may change people's perceptions of the world and of themselves.

Reading expert Dr. Jeanne Chall of Harvard calls this Stage 3:

> "During Stage 1 and 2 what is learned concerns the relating of print to speech. In Stages 3 and beyond, what is learned concerns the relating of print to ideas. Very little new information about the world is learned from reading before Stage 3; more is learned from listening and watching. It is with the beginning of Stage 3 that reading competes with these other means of knowing..."[1]

I have been teaching a typical Stage 3 class for the past two years. My class is very diverse in age, race, culture, social class and native language. It includes people from the North and South of the U.S., West Indians, Haitians, Chinese, Hispanics, and one Philippino; they range in age from 19 to 62. Though two or three of them (all non-native English speakers) have a fairly extensive educational background, most of them have had limited schooling and for some, school was a very painful experience. Five of the students are dyslexic to some degree.

There are 15 people in the class. During the year some of them move on or drop out and some new ones join, leaving a core group of about ten who stay throughout the year. This is an evening class, so people are coming from work, and they're tired. However, they are **not** a quiet group and have many comments, opinions and jokes about me, each other, and the world. This is a characteristic which I think has helped a lot in their learning and in my teaching. They are able to laugh at themselves and each other in a way that breaks tension rather than embarrassing someone, which also helps us get through some difficult learning.

They initially used comments and jokes as a means of avoiding the printed page, which most of them could not even **look at** for long, let alone concentrate on. They would take a few words from the text and then get into a discussion of something they had heard or experienced. Comments on the reading were usually opinions they already held and were not based on an understanding of the text. Thus our first forays into learning to get information through print met with strong resistance.

There were strong reasons for this: Their decoding of more than two-syllable words was still shaky. Their reading vocabulary was not very developed. Reading, as yet, did not feel like a reliable way to get information. Many of them also felt uneducated, surrounded by people -- at least on television and in a lot of the life around them -- who **were** educated.

They were not comfortable with the "educated" world and so resisted becoming part of it. Learning by reading rather than by experience probably seemed like a choice between pate de foie gras and chicken and was met with comments like: "I never was good at this in school," or a story about something fairly unrelated to the reading.

They **are**, in fact, uneducated. Though very knowledgeable and experienced in some ways, their lack of schooling and of the ability to read well left them with big gaps in basic subjects: knowledge of basic history, geography and science, which is assumed by, for example, newspaper writers and TV newscasters, is largely missing. They could not relate to things they read that were outside their experience. Thus reading produced a tension that disrupted the learning process.

For us to begin to read and discuss new material, I had to set it up so that they could handle it and also to cut off some of their routes of escape from the printed page. I cut readings up into short sections (xerox, cut and paste) and wrote questions after each section. At first I left no space to write answers; the students had to underline the part of the reading which answered each question and put the question number next to it. I was fussy about underlining complete sentences. They did well and were glad they did not have to write. After they got used to the method, though, I left space, and most people began to write their answers in addition to underlining them. I have gradually moved from asking only fact questions to asking more questions based on inference and the ability to draw conclusions. With these, too, students have to show on what parts of the text they base their answers.

Of course, I also had to decide **what** to read. The growing number of books published for adults at grade 4-8 reading level are usually odd collections of unrelated topics such as: working women, the New Hampshire primary, computers, labor unions, and "Ray A. Kroc, builder of the McDonald's hamburger empire," which "have been selected to meet a wide range of adult interests, ... are written in the natural language used by real prople in daily life," and "deal with real concerns about living in today's world."[2] It seemed that the editors made some fairly arbitrary assumptions about adult interests, language, and "real concerns." The women in my class could tell the authors more than they would want to know about working women. Most of my students are not interested in voting. (**Why** they are not would be a good topic.) And, although they or their kids may frequent McDonald's, Ray A. Kroc is not a person they relate to or care about. (I do not mean to attack *Snapshots*, only the so-called "high interest/low vocabulary" collections of readings it typifies. Such collections are neither pate de foie gras, nor are they chicken, but instead they more closely resemble Heinz 57 varieties.)

As an alternative, I chose to teach United States history. Because we live here it has touched us all, and still does; we are part of it. I found some good materials (listed in the Appendix). Very important for my choice was history's framework of time and place. I hoped it would provide an underlying coherence that would be helpful for learning and thinking. I felt that a coherent framework would give the students points of reference and the possibility of making connections beyond those immediate to their own situations.

I introduced the time and place framework with a look at maps (world continents and the Americas) and time lines (with the concept of B.C.). I divided the history into broad subjects or into eras -- native Americans, the beginnings of the United States, the government of the United States, slavery, territorial growth, immigration, and workers. General time periods were used more often than dates for specific events. With each reading I emphasized and reviewed the time and place references. A date like 10,000 B.C., the time of the Indian migration to North America, made its own statement: our few hundreds of years here pale next to the native American's many thousands and the term "native American" has more meaning. Seeing the United States territorial expansion on a map highlighted the stories behind each addition of territory. Maps and time lines were like the kinesthetic elements I was trained to include in teaching reading to dyslexic students.

At first, maps made everyone moan, groan, curse and yell. ("I never was good at this in school!") After the first world map ("name the continents") fiasco, we had to back up. I made graph paper with big blocks. North is up, South is down, East is right, West is left. We directed each other to draw lines: Go one block north. Go two blocks east. Now go four blocks south, etc., until everyone got used to those orientations. We practiced with labelled maps: What's south of the U.S.? North of Africa? Which states are east of California? Then they labelled the world map and the U.S. map; they did it many times, and I still give them the world map about every third class, which most people now label with facility. For most readings we used maps

to see where events took place; time and place were always elements of pre- and post-reading discussions.

For each era or event I found at least one reading passage, sometimes from fiction, that made it more personal or interesting. Following are some quotes:

> "America was not discovered by Christopher Columbus."[3]
>
> "...They (white people) must be hard of hearing... They talk loud though they stand close enough to each other to touch with a stick."[4]
>
> "Helping other slaves to escape was a dangerous business, but fear did not stop Harriet Tubman."[5]
>
> "There are really two camps, one for the white people and one for the Chinese coolies."[6]
>
> "I must cross the sea — life has become too hard here for poor folk."[7]
>
> "As for myself, I regard my work people just as I regard my machinery."[8]
>
> "Cesar (Chavez) said, 'The women have to be involved'... So I sat straight up and said to myself, 'That's what I want.'"[9]

After two semesters of U.S. history I expanded the time and place framework to include studies of Africa, India and Japan, the Ice Age and the earliest people, and the ancient civilizations of China, Egypt and Greece. We had more maps and time lines. This expansion to a study of widely varied places and times, with an ever more solid time/place framework to build on has made it easy to intersperse newspaper articles and other readings about what's going on now (events in Haiti and the Philippines, the Colombian volcano, the near-strike by Boston hotel workers, the bombing of Libya). I think we all feel more open to including everything now that there is a time/place background with a number of blanks filled in. It's easier to make connections, and each reading is not in a completely new context; there is something familiar to build on.

This year I have integrated writing into the curriculum with topics such as:

"Imagine someone picked you up right now with just what you have with you and put you down in the woods. How would you survive?"
(This was to think more about how early humans lived.)

To think about going back in time:

"Write about something old you have in your house. Describe it, and tell where it came from."

After reading about the hotel workers' vote to strike:

"Write a letter to your boss, and tell him/her what you would like changed."

The results of using these curricula have been good: people's reading scores and writing have improved. For me the biggest thrill is that now we talk about all kinds of things; our discussions are based on the readings with the integration of people's knowledge and experience, and they are often very interesting. The students seem to be looking for new information from their reading, rather than backing away from it. Discussions still become raucously irrelevant, sometimes, but I feel that a real opening up has taken place, and it has made us all feel better about being in the classroom. In some ways this curriculum is like old-fashioned "basic education," with more human interest stories but without (I hope) the race and class biases that characterized the way most of us were taught. Without those biases, I think "basic education" in the traditional sense of learning basic history, geography, science and math can be vital, relevant, and even empowering.

Footnotes

1. Jeanne S. Chall, "New Views on Developing Basic Skills With Adults," paper given at National Conference on Adult Literacy, Washington, D.C. 1984, pp. 6-8.
2. Brian Shenk, Executive Editor, *Snapshots: A Collection of Readings for Adults*, New York: Cambridge Book Company, 1984, pp. v-vi, and selections 3, 7, & 9, and 12.
3. Katherine Lancelot-Harrington, *America Past and Present:* Vol. I, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1981, p. 1.
4. Larry Cuban and Philip Roden, *Promise of America: Struggling for the Dream*, Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1971, p. 61.
5. John T. King and Marcet H. King, *Famous Black Americans*, Austin, Texas: Steck-Vaughn, 1975, p. 117.
6. John M. Dennis, *O, Promised Land*, Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1982, p. 27.
7. *ibid.*, p. 1.
8. Cuban and Roden, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
9. Ellen Cantarow, *Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980, p. 134.

Appendix

Book List for U.S. History:

Cantarow, Ellen, *Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980.

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Author Biography

Judy Hikes started her teaching career in the Peace Corps in Nigeria and has since continued to love working with and teaching people from other cultures as well as from her own. She has a B.A. in French from Douglass College and an M.A.T. from Yale. She is currently a counselor and teacher at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge.

MUD, A Theatrical Review

by Marty Kingsbury

On Saturday, March 29, I was lucky enough to attend a one time only Boston performance of "MUD" by the Omaha Magic Theatre at the Women In Theatre Festival at the Boston Shakespeare Theatre. Written by Marie Irene Fornes, "MUD" is about illiteracy, ignorance and the horrifying ramifications they have upon people's lives. With 60 million Americans nationwide gripped by illiteracy and with locally the Boston Public Schools reporting that more students drop-out than graduate (*Boston Globe*, March, 1986), "MUD" rings with passion and turmoil. Stuck in the mud, mired in sloth, in the personal and societal sloth of ignorance, violence, despair, loneliness, and impotence, Fornes' characters are desperate. The play is disgusting at times, and confusing at others, but all in all "MUD" has much to teach about the implications of illiteracy, not only for individuals, but for society as well.

The play centers around Mae, a woman in her 40s, who rejoices in her return to school, in the chance to finally learn reading and arithmetic. She irons trousers, washes floors, cooks a disgusting slop called dinner, and, in her free time, struggles through words and their meanings. She describes herself as a "hungry soul, a longing soul, an empty soul...Sometimes I feel hollow and base and I don't have a mind." But when she reads her primer about starfish and hermit crabs, the world of the ocean comes to rural America. And though she is asked "What would be the use of learning if it doesn't help shape your life?", she must weed through a lot of confusion, passion, and hunger before an answer emerges.

Lloyd, her mate (he's her mate in the way animals mate, thrown into the same cage and so they mate), is jealous and threatened by Mae's new accomplishments. If she learns, if she becomes better than he, if she ceases to depend on him, she will not only expose his ignorance, she will leave. In his disgust, he attempts to prove his masculinity and worth by a recount of yesterday's successful masturbation. His semen hit the wall. He was sitting in his filthy, broken down, wooden chair and his semen spurted all the way to the wall. See? It's still there! As if to say that I'm a man and your fancy numbers and words can't change that. For Lloyd, numbers are three nickels in his pocket, and words are things that stick in the throat and add to the stress and frustration of life.

Lloyd is soon edged out of his bed, his throne, his position as man of the house, by Henry, a "smart" man, one who can read **and** do arithmetic. This new hero can help Mae with her studies, maybe teach Lloyd as well. But from the outside it is obvious that Henry's reading skills are almost as pathetic as Lloyd's. He makes hogwash out of a medical pamphlet on impotency. Mae and Henry, in their new found self-esteem, can only pretend to understand the meaning of the words. It isn't much, but it is enough to keep Lloyd well planted in infantilism. And like the veritable hermit crab of Mae's primer, Henry battles with the weaker animal and rises victorious, the rightful "owner" of the "shell" of Mae's bed.

And so, these three characters, mud-covered, filthy, and competitive all, begin to use each other as their bootstraps out of the mud. But every attempt to move forward is balanced by another attempt to pull back. Fear and dependency make it seem better to rot in their cage than to get out. And when the heroic Henry takes a simple fall, life recoils its ugly and complicated head, crippling him to a near paraplegic state. Change is almost too horrific to

conceive.

And yet, for Mae, change is also impossible to avoid. Knowledge, by its mere presence in her life, pushes her toward a new shape and new answers. She decides to leave. She told us it would happen in the first scene, and now it's going to happen. She is sick of the endless explanations, disgusted by the fact that now she has two men totally dependent on her for their care and well-being, and discouraged (but also rebellious) regarding how "everything turns bad for me." She packs her muddy clothes and worn-out belongings and walks out the door. She is ready to find somewhere else to go. Where? She doesn't know yet. It doesn't matter.

Lloyd inevitably follows with a shotgun, shoots her, and brings her home to stay forever. And again, the reading from Mae's primer reveals the shape and meaning of things: like the starfish, "I live in the dark and my eyes see only a faint light. Faint, and yet it consumes me. I would die for it." And so she does, leaving Lloyd and Henry with only futile action against loneliness and powerlessness.

Disturbed and disoriented, much of the audience stayed for a panel discussion with JoAnn Schmidman, who played Mae, and Marie Irene Fornes, the playwright. Centering around the end of the play, people asked, almost demanded, of Fornes that she change the end. Why is it inevitable that Mae be killed? Why, when we applaud her exit, when we are so uplifted by her courage to go, to break free, to move on, to free her most intelligent self, must we follow her to death? How are we to escape from our own ignorance if death is what we see on the stage?

But the playwright, who has been a teacher in the New York City schools, stood firm. "We're stuck in something. We want to make things pretty and they're not pretty...In the end these characters are not real — they're fiction. Mae is fiction. Lloyd is fiction. Please learn something from these fictional characters...Because if you can't say what's going on in a way that people can understand you, you end up killing people."

Lloyd, as an exaggerated fictional character, certainly carries this metaphor and symbolism of the role of violence in illiteracy. Here is a man who has been shunted aside again and again, even in his own house, his mini-cosm of society. Henry talks about Lloyd as a creature of futility. He says that the only reason Lloyd isn't a drunk is because he is poor. If he had money, he'd be a drunk. But is Lloyd's only way out through the route of drugs and alcoholism? That's the information Lloyd gets, and so it's best to stay in the cage.

The other thing about Lloyd is that, in his dependency on Mae, he believes that power is something which comes in finite measure. Mae's successful acquisition of knowledge and power means the depletion of his. He cannot stop her from wanting to leave him. He can barely get himself out of the house to have his impotency examined. And when he does and his health is only a prescription away, he is still powerless without any money to buy medication or, if he gets that far, to read how many pills to take and how often. All he knows is an animalistic survival: how to use a gun. It is not his personality which leads him to violence; it is the frustration and the circumstances in which he is caught.

And so Fornes offers us Mae, a carrier of hope, hope that grapples with poetry and passion to make shape and sense of her life, hope that has been assassinated again and again and still struggles through the dim fog of despair. Every scrap of knowledge that she acquires is relished, savored and used. Each piece pushes her closer to the clarity and the route of the mud that she has been seeking her entire life. Like Martin Luther King, John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X, or John Lennon, she sees a faint light and is willing to follow it, even to death. She knows that power is not finite, that hers does not come at the expense of Lloyd's. She knows it is something that she wants for herself.

She is the student, the hundreds of students who walk into the classroom, only to confront the fact that her reading and math skills are below the fifth grade level and even a GED is miles away. But the learning! After all these years the ability to make sense of words and numbers is so exciting that she makes time, conjures money for transportation, finagles day care, and comes back to school. The students who manage to stay in the programs, who stick it out and finish their GED, do so because of enormous determination and emotional effort to change the humiliation and powerlessness of many years. They do so because the craving to learn outweighs the inner, familial, or social judgements of stupidity. They do so even though they know that a GED in and of itself does not guarantee a good job. They do so even though they must also face up to change and the subsequent conflicts which change presents to them.

"If you want to change the end of the play, then

change society," one of the women on the panel finally yelled. But where do we start with this huge undertaking? Caught in a vicious cycle, many students vie for Welfare transportation to get to school, to get an education, so they can eventually get off of Welfare. Caught in a similar vicious cycle, adult education programs are forced to compete with day care, health, drugs and alcohol, elderly, and housing programs for funding.

It is no coincidence that the rise in military funding is coupled with severe cutbacks in human services. The perpetuation of illiteracy makes for a convenient gateway to a military state. At its most extreme, illiteracy could undermine the fundamentals of democracy. Voting is not merely putting an X in a square box. It is the understanding of the issues and history of a country, a say in the course of the future. Amiri Baraka, poet, playwright and essayist, in a lecture at the Harvard Science Center on April 10, 1986, went so far as to claim that German Fascism was modelled on American slavery. A frightening idea, but one that when pushed to the limit, clearly connects illiteracy and the inability to move forward with violence, both personal and social.

But as an educator, I will say this: I have never worked with people more hungry to learn, more willing to make mistakes, more open to trying new things. I love Mae as a character. I love her rejoicing in education, her determination to make sense of things, her willingness to grapple with new meanings. Her existence makes me rage against the dying, pushes me out of complacency and futility, and challenges me to find new ways to teach, to reveal meaning, to see the effects knowledge has on people's lives. This work that we do of carefully listening, of finding the questions in the midst of confusion, of answering them clearly and directly again and again until the point is learned, really is important.

Perhaps Lloyd is right when he says, out of his deepest visionary wisdom, "Soon things will be used only once. Our time will be precious and we won't have time to waste caring for things." But I really agree with Mae when she responds: "I don't think I'll be wanted in such a world. In such a world people will be of little value."

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Working With Students on the G.E.D.

by Steve Reuys

I. Introduction

One of the most common replies from students, when asked why they're interested in attending an adult basic education program, is "I want to get my GED." Although EDP/ADP (External or Adult Diploma Program) opportunities exist in some cities and make it possible for adults to obtain an actual high school diploma, the GED/high school equivalency certificate route is still the main road toward credentialing available to and chosen by most adults without a high school diploma. (The letters "GED," by the way, have been subject to all sorts of interpretations; they in fact stand for the phrase "General Educational Development.")

A large number of programs have been working for years to help students study for and pass the GED test, and most of these programs have developed their own policies and procedures, tips and techniques. This article may be of some use to experienced staff at these GED programs that have been operating for some time, but it is primarily intended for staff at new programs or new staff at old programs who may be looking for some help and advice on working with students on the GED. The comments here are meant to give those of you who fit this description some information, some cautions, some pieces of advice regarding instruction, testing procedures, test-taking, and other aspects of the GED that you're unlikely to find in commercial or government publications.

Persons looking for brilliant theoretical insights or piercing educational argument will, I'm afraid, be disappointed, for this article contains little of that but rather is intended simply as something of a practical guide to the GED. However there will, of course, be points with which you disagree, and I'd certainly be interested in hearing comments from readers.

I should also mention that the information and thoughts expressed here were developed largely while working for six years with the ABE/GED program at the Boston Indian Council; my thinking on the GED is derived primarily from that experience.

II. Teaching and Learning

To a degree that is quite obvious to anyone who looks at the GED, it is clear that the test itself goes a long way toward defining the teaching and learning that must take place in a GED program. But it doesn't define them entirely, and students and teachers still have a certain degree of flexibility. I will here attempt to point out both some of the things that must happen in helping students prepare for the GED as well as some of the ways in which choices do still exist.

A. General

First of all, let me make clear that I don't want to spend time explaining the overall content of the GED or the rationale behind the test. Anyone not familiar with the test in general should look at any of the commercially published GED preparation workbooks. Information on why the GED is the way it is and how it is being revised for 1988 can be obtained from the GED Testing Service, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C., 20036.

B. Reading

Reading is far and away the most important skill area tested by the GED. Reading is related to every one of the five tests. The Reading Skills test — that's obvious. Both the Social Studies and Science tests are primarily reading comprehension tests targeted toward material in these two content areas. While some questions are not based on material that is provided and thus do require previous knowledge, and therefore some background in social studies and science is helpful, these questions are a minority of those on each test and the background is not necessary. The most important need with regard to all three of these reading-based tests is the ability to read a variety of non-fiction materials that have been removed from their context and that may or may not be of interest to the reader, to think about what is being read, and to answer certain types of multiple choice comprehension questions regarding this material. The Writing Skills test, with its emphasis on editing skills (more on this later), creates a situation that good readers, who are familiar with the look and feel of standard English, can benefit from . And last but not least, the Math test consists largely of word problems (again, more on this later) which also put a premium on good comprehension skills and which will absolutely stymie any student whose math abilities are limited to pure computation. All of this obviously indicates that reading is the single most important area for students to work on. Good comprehension skills are necessary and sufficient to do well on three of the tests (Reading Skills, Social Studies, and Science) and are necessary, though not sufficient, to do well on the other two.

C. Writing

The Writing Skills test is currently not so much a test of writing skills as it is a test of editing skills. I say "currently" because, come 1988, the Writing Skills test will contain an actual writing sample in addition to the standard multiple-choice editing types of questions. This change will give GED teachers the legitimate excuse to work with students on their writing, if they have not already felt able to do so. (GED students tend to be very goal-oriented; anything not on the test, especially something as frightening as writing, is often difficult to persuade students to focus on.) An entire article could be devoted to working with students in writing. Here I will simply say that teachers need to focus on process, not just product, and on meaning, not just mechanics — in short, to see writing as a holistic form of communication. A quiet revolution is taking place in the teaching of writing, a revolution that comes at a very appropriate time for GED teachers looking toward 1988.

Till then, however, the Writing Skills test will continue to focus simply on editing skills, and teachers will need to work specially with students in this area. Actual writing can still be used in very important ways toward this end, but for now, being able to answer multiple-choice questions focusing on grammar, mechanics, and structure is the major goal.

A final word on language. This test is interested in standard English. Depending on a student's cultural, class, and educational background, standard English will be foreign to them to varying degrees. Again, much could be written here about this aspect of language, and again I'll simply say that teachers need to recognize the validity of students' own forms of language and to make it clear to them that "standard English" should be seen as an addition to rather than as a replacement for their own patterns of communication.

D. Math

Students often have great difficulty with word problems, and yet that is what the Math test on the GED consists of. The point here is that teachers must be sure that students concentrate on reading, analyzing, understanding, and solving word problems **throughout** the course of their work in math, not simply as an unwelcome postscript to their preparation. They may not like doing this and may feel that math **is** computation, but it is absolutely crucial that they work on word problems and that you explain to them why this is necessary.

E. Considering Student Goals

Without urging students to eliminate any options for the future, it is only realistic to consider the instructional needs of GED students in light of their current goals. What one student may want or need to emphasize may not be as important for someone else. This can be seen by considering the situations of a few students. For example, anyone thinking of going on to college may want to study a good deal more than someone who wants the GED as a credential for obtaining or keeping a job. This is true both because students can benefit in college settings from further development of their skills and because colleges, in their admissions decisions, look not only at whether a student has a diploma or GED (and most colleges will consider GED graduates) but also at the scores which that student obtained — the higher the scores, the greater the applicant's chances

for admission. (Usually, scores don't matter too much — you either pass the test or you don't-but in some cases, such as this one, scores are important.)

Another situation specifically involves the math test. Students who expect to have a need for more advanced math skills (such as geometry and algebra) may well want to study these areas in preparing for the test. Students who do not expect to need these skills may want to concentrate on the areas of basic arithmetic (including whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percents, and basic measurement). It is true that algebra and geometry do comprise a significant number of the problems on the test; it is also true, however, that knowing these areas well is not **necessary** to pass the test. Students who devote most of their energies to getting those basic arithmetic skills down cold and developing the ability to handle word problems effectively **can** pass the test.

F. Other Instructional Choices

The GED test is defined, but how teachers and students go about preparing for the test does leave room for choices. One thing you and they must choose is which materials to use. Of course, the published GED preparation workbooks are obvious materials to select. Indeed, in all fairness to the students, these workbooks really should be used with virtually everyone at least to some extent, so that students can become experienced in dealing with the types of material and particularly the types of questions they will have to face on the test. But published workbooks needn't be the only materials you use. Teachers can develop ways of using all sorts of reading materials that are of interest or of use to the students; they can use student writings; they can draw math problems from everyday situations. What you use should depend on the needs, interests, and preferences of your students, as well as on the way in which your class is structured.

The full range of ways in which a class can be set up is open to you with a GED group. Students can work individually, in small groups, as one large group, or in various combinations of these. It's important to remember, though, that doing a variety of activities in some sort of group structure doesn't have to mean that all students must be working on the same things at the same pace all the time. Students have different needs and learn at different rates and enough flexibility must be maintained to accommodate this.

III. Practice Testing

Students should take GED practice tests for several reasons: 1) They help to let both student and teacher know when the student is ready to take one or more of the tests; 2)If the student is not yet ready, they can help both student and teacher know what areas or types of questions a student may be having trouble with; and 3) They help students get used to the test — the way things are set up, the types of material that are likely to appear, the types of questions that are likely to be asked — and to become comfortable with all of these things.

There are two main types and sources of GED practice tests. One type is norm-referenced to provide a predicted score that tells how the student would be likely to do if she/he were to take the actual test at that time. The major source of this type of test is the GED Testing Service itself, which produces practice tests that are distributed by Cambridge publishers. Another test that gives predicted scores is the GEPI, published by Steck-Vaughn, and there may be others as well.

The other sort of test is represented by all those pre- and post-tests that are found in the numerous sets of GED preparation workbooks. Taken together, all these workbooks provide a large number of practice tests in each of the five areas that can essentially be used interchangeably. These tests tend to be criterion-referenced to various lists of skills or types of questions or sub-content areas, so as to show where a student's particular strengths and weaknesses may be.

Both types of tests obviously fit the third purpose listed above — to help students become familiar and comfortable with the test. The difference lies in the fact that the normed tests which predict scores are more suited to purpose #1, while the criterion-referenced test are more suited to purpose #2. Both should probably be used with most students, but at different times. For example, the predictor tests may be useful for initial assessment to see how a student "stands" with regard to the GED (that is — Could she/he pass the test right away, without any real study? Or is she/he on the border line of passing so that taking the test without study would be a gamble? Or is she/he within striking distance of passing but also definitely in need of some work to raise scores to that level? Or is the GED simply way out of reach at this time, with a need for the student to work more on the basic ABE skills first?) And on this basis they can, of course, help in deciding how to group students, when this is necessary or desirable in your program or class. The predictor tests are also helpful when used (a portion of the test at a time) to confirm that a student is now ready to

take one or more sections of the GED (e.g., Math or Social Studies or whatever). In these cases, it is the predicted score that is important, whether for the entire test or for a single section of it.

On the other hand, the criterion-referenced tests are, as usual, more closely tied to actual instruction and are more likely to help a student figure out very specifically within any particular test where she/he is doing well and where she/he needs to do more work. (These pre- and post-tests haven't usually been correlated to the GED scoring system and normed through field tests, so they aren't really intended to predict scores, but, depending on how a student does, you may still be able to get some idea of how she/he would be likely to score on a regular test.)

IV. Registering for the Test

The procedures that govern registration for the GED test can sometimes cause as much difficulty for a student as the test itself. A variety of administrative regulations exist, some of them established by the GED Testing Service in Washington, which creates and distributes the test, some by the various state agencies which oversee testing and the grading of equivalency certificates based on test results within their states, and some by the chief examiners, located at the various test sites, who actually control the on-site test-taking procedures.

In Massachusetts, you can contact the GED Office within the Bureau of Student, Community, and Adult Services at the Mass. Department of Education for a copy of the state policies concerning the GED test and for a current list of GED test sites throughout the state. Based on this list, you and your students should figure out the site(s) that will be most convenient and appropriate for them at which to take the tests. You should then contact these sites to obtain all the necessary information. Geographic location is certainly an important criterion in choosing a test site, but there are other factors as well.

Most importantly, test sites offer the GED on very different schedules, ranging from every week to a few times a year. They may also be open on different days and at different times. You should find out the testing schedules for any site your students might be apt to want to use. And when you contact the test sites, you should also find out what their procedures are regarding registration, etc., for they may vary from site to site.

a) You should ask how students must pay for the test. Although the cost will be the same at each site (currently $20 — $15 for the testing fee which goes to the test site itself and $5 for the registration fee which goes to the state GED office), payment procedures may vary. At some sites students may need to pay these two amounts separately (e.g. two separate money orders, one for $15 and one for $5). You should also find out what forms of payment are accepted — cash, personal checks, or money orders?

b) You should see how far in advance of the first planned testing date a student needs to register, or whether it is possible to register on the day of the test. Also, should the students expect to be notified in the mail that they are officially registered and can begin testing or should they simply appear at the next test date after turning in their forms?

c) You should find out the test site's policy on identification. Is an ID needed to register and/or to take the tests? If so, must it be a picture ID? For students without a suitable ID, can anything be used as an acceptable substitute (such as a letter from your program or some sort of signature comparison arrangement)?

d) You should make sure that each student can choose how many and which specific tests she/he wants to take at any particular time. There is no requirement that students take the five tests in any particular order or that they take them all at once (say within a single two-day testing period). Some sites may prefer this, however, and students may be led to believe that this is a requirement. It can be very helpful if you are aware of the particular practices regarding test choice at all the test sites your students might use and if you are able to let them know in advance what to expect and what their actual "rights" are.

e) You should check into whether the test site strictly times students while they are taking tests. Although the GED is meant to be a "power" rather than a "speed" exam, each test does have a certain amount of time allocated to it. Chief examiners do, however, have some latitude on this and sites vary as to how strictly they enforce the time limits. For students who work more slowly than others, using a site that does not push the time limits could be a big help.

f) Finally, you should find out how quickly students can expect to be told their results once they have finished testing. A test site ought to be able to send out score reports, giving the five scores and indicating whether the student has passed or failed,

within a reasonable amount of time, say two to three weeks. (Students should understand that they may not be told any of their scores until they've done all five tests. Also, students should keep the test site informed of any changes in address so they can be sure to receive their test score reports in the mail. It usually takes a while for the actual equivalency certificate to be issued by the state once testing is completed, so it's important to be sure the GED office is given address changes as well.)

Once students have begun to take tests at whichever site(s) you and they have chosen, you'll want to talk with them afterwards to see whether everything went as you and they expected based on the information you had gathered or whether they ran into any problems. In this way, you'll know to contact the test site to clarify any issues so that other students don't encounter the same problems in the future, or at least so that they don't do so unexpectedly.

Two final things you should know — 1) Versions of the GED test are given in Spanish and in French as well as in English, and, for persons with visual problems, it is also available in large print editions, in braille, and on audio-cassettes. You should contact the individual test sites or the state office for the availability of these particular versions of the test. 2) A student must be 16 years of age or older to register and take the GED. However, anyone under 19 years of age can take the test only if that person is not currently enrolled in school; she/he will also **not** receive the actual equivalency certificate from the state until her/his original school class has graduated, although she/he **will** receive the score report indicating whether she/he passed the test or not. (The purpose of all this is to encourage high school kids to stay in school and graduate rather than get GED certificates and drop out instead.) Therefore, in order to register, a person who is 16, 17, or 18 years old needs to get a letter from the school that she/he last attended, stating that she/he is no longer enrolled there and when she/he would have graduated had she/he stayed with her/his original class.

V. Test-Taking

I've talked earlier about the importance of preparing students who are going to take the GED test so they know what to expect and so there are no unwelcome surprises. They need to know how the test "works" and what they can do to increase their chances of passing. While at the Boston Indian Council, I prepared a list of "Tips on Taking the GED Tests" to give to students. I'm including this list here to end this article. Of course, you'll come up with tips of your own that could be added to this list; you can look upon this one as sort of a starter set.

Good luck to you and your students!

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Author Biography

Steve Reuys is currently the Staff Development Coordinator at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston. Prior to this, he worked for six years at the Boston Indian Council, teaching in and coordinating their Adult Education (ABE/GED) Program. He has also taught writing and reading at the college level, coordinated a multicultural education project, and worked as a volunteer at other adult education and alternative high school programs. One of his first efforts in the field of education, back in 1973, was to write *A Handbook for Tutors of High School Equivalency (GED) English Grammer*. He has an M.Ed. from Antioch University/Institute of Open Education in Cambridge and a B.S. from M.I.T. He was responsible, with John Croes, for pulling together last year's first issue of *Connections*.

Tips On Taking The GED Tests

1) The GED is made up of five tests--one math, one English (grammar, etc.) and three reading (one using social studies materials, one using science materials, and one using practical and literary materials.) Each test is rather long, and you may not want to take more than one in a single day. If you do, by the time you get to the second test, you may be too tired to do as well on it as you otherwise could.

2) Before taking any of these tests, you should prepare for it by doing at least one of the practice tests that are available in class. (There's not much point, though, in asking people who have recently taken a test for specific questions and then trying to memorize the answers. There are many different versions of each test and you're not very likely to get the one you've memorized answers for.)

3) Remember to bring pencils and an eraser with you to the test.

4) Read the directions carefully for each section of the test you are taking.

5) When you mark an answer, make sure that the number on your answer sheet matches the number of the question you're answering. A right answer marked in the wrong space becomes just a wrong answer.

6) The time limit for each test is either an hour and a half (Social Studies, Science, and Math) or an hour and 15 minutes (Writing) or an hour (Reading). Usually, though, you won't be strictly timed and you may be able to take longer if you need to. So don't rush through the test, but don't spend too long on each question either.

7) While taking a test, try not to get discouraged. Nobody is expected to get everything right; in fact, what you're really aiming for is to get at least half the questions right. But you really can't tell what your score will be from how many you think you're answering correctly. So don't get caught up in trying to figure out how you're doing--just keep going and do as well as you can. And don't panic--you can always take any test over again.

8) If you don't know the answer to a question, guess. (Since there's no penalty for wrong answers, you shouldn't leave any questions blank on your answer sheet.) But don't guess until you've looked the question over carefully, given it a try, and at least eliminated the answers that are obviously wrong.

9) ON THE READING TESTS — —

a) With each selection, you should read the passage, then take each question one at a time and look back to the passage to find or check your answer. Keep in mind that this isn't a memory test where you're not allowed to look back; on the GED you're **supposed** to refer back to what you've read while answering the questions.

b) For each question, be sure to read all the possible answers and then choose the best one. Don't just pick the first one you see that seems right. Many times, the choices will be very close, and you need to pick the one that's best. Also, watch out for key words that affect the meaning of a statement or question--words like "not, never, none, always, every, all" etc.

c) For the most part, despite what you yourself may know or think about a certain subject, you should generally base your answers only on what is contained in the passage you've read.

d) The answers to comprehension questions won't always be obvious. Sometimes, to come up with the right answer to a question, you will have to recognize it stated in the passage in different words, or fit together pieces of the answer found in different parts of the passage, or find clues in the passage and figure out the answer from them.

e) A few hints--If two of the possible choices are very similar, the answer to that question is likely to be one of them. And if two of the choices are opposites, the answer's probably one of them. Finally, given a choice between short and long answers, the correct pick is more likely to be long rather than short.

10) ON THE MATH TEST--If you don't know how to solve the problem to get the answer, sometimes you may be able to work backwards, to try out the choices they give you by plugging them into the problem and seeing which one works. For example, in an algebra problem, if you don't know how to solve $8x + 3 = 59$, you could still try out the different choices--a) 6, b) 7, c) 8, d) 9, or e) different answer--and you'd discover that answer b) 7 is the one that works.

If you have any questions about any of this, ask one of the teachers in class. Obviously, it's better to clear things up before taking a test than after.

GOOD LUCK!

(**Note:** One or two things, such as the time limits, may change starting sometime in 1988.)

Pronunciation Through Minimal Sets and the Silent Way

by Patricia A. Ryan and John Croes

"Pronunciation exercises? Waste of time. They don't help. Isolated exercises don't improve pronunciation. Speech improves over time and as students are exposed to more of the language. Besides, they're boring."

This is the attitude some ESL teachers have towards classwork on pronunciation. We believe the opposite, however, and find that the regular inclusion of pronunciation exercises into ESL lessons not only improves speech but also is stimulating, fun and confidence-building for our students. This article presents one approach to focusing on pronunciation with ESL adult students.

While working in Bataan Refugee Processing Center with Indochinese adults who were learning ESL, a linguist friend introduced us to a new idea for teaching pronunciation. Having studied many of the Southeast Asian languages, he had noted sounds that tended to give each population group special difficulty in spoken English. For most of the Southeast Asian students (Lao, Vietnamese, Khmer, Thai and Hmong), their handling of final consonants proved to be the cause of incomprehensibility. (While the examples in this article are for Indochinese ESL learners, the lessons can be used easily and effectively with speakers of any languages). "Minimal sets" was his way of focusing the students' attention on these particular sounds.

The idea behind pronunciation lessons is to help the learners first become aware of the sounds through listening and then to help them produce those sounds. The usual technique is to use minimal **pairs,** which contrast differences in only one phoneme in two words. A lesson on the /d/-/t/ contrast might use the following minimal pair list, which presents the /d/-/t/ contrast in initial, medial and final positions:

mad	mat
seed	seat
dear	tear
done	ton
herding	hurting
ladder	latter

A typical lesson proceeds from listening to the contrasts and discriminating between pairs aurally through pronouncing the pairs distinctly and even pronouncing minimal sentences using the contrasts, e.g. The seed/seat he gave me was wet. The Nilsens' book, *Pronunciation Contrasts in English,* illustrates a number of minimal pair exercise formats.

Minimal Sets

A minimal **set,** however, focuses on a **range** of sounds in the same position rather than simply a contrast of two sounds. This is important because while the students may have the same phonemes in their own languages, they may not pronounce them in the same position as in English, i.e., at the end of words/syllables or after/before certain vowels. For example, a student may be able to produce /t/ perfectly in **net** but not in **ten,** and the reason might be that in the student's native language the /t/ exists but only in final positions. Similarly, a student might not be able to produce the /t/ in **night** even though it occurs in his/her native language in the final position: the reason might be that in the native language, the /t/ doesn't occur after the /ay/ diphthong.

To provide practice in a range of sounds, we use a set

rather than a pair. The following set would be useful with several Southeast Asian learners:

mat mass mats mast match mash

The set could also include **mad, mag, Mack, mask, Max, map, man, Madge** and **ma'am.** Notice that the contrasts are final position consonants, clusters or digraphs following the vowel /ae/. The content of these pronunciation lessons, then, is extended sets of minimal contrasts.

Presentation

To present these lists, we have borrowed the color scheme idea from the *Silent Way*. We use colored cards, two inches square, to represent each single phoneme: a red card signifies the /t/ sound, green the /s/, etc. A cluster is indicated by pointing to two cards, one before the other: red, green = /ts/, green, red = /st/. We tape the cards along the blackboard and present two, three, four or more sounds in the set we are teaching that day. Learners quickly associate a color with a sound. Using the cards to signify sounds eliminates the need for written symbols, which add so much confusion in English. Consequently, the presentation can be completely oral and accessible to beginners who are not literate.

As with minimal pairs, the students first concentrate on **hearing** the differences in the sets. We pronounce the words in the set while pointing to each to establish the color-sound relationship. We want each colored card to automatically signal a sound throughout the entirety of the ESL course. The students in groups — and later individually — demonstrate their ability to discriminate what they hear by pointing to the cards as I pronounce the sets.

When the students can discriminate the sounds aurally, they can try pronouncing the sounds. We usually do not have students simply pronounce the isolated phonemes represented by the cards. Rather, we provide a stem for the students to manipulate. For example, on hearing /ma/ and seeing which card we point to, the student(s) will pronounce **mat, mass, mats,** etc. We then alter the stems, changing /ma/ to /ca/ and /pa/, for example, so that students produce **cat, Cass, cats,** and **Pat, pass, Pat's** etc. Eventually, we provide practice with several stems: we may use /ma/, /lī/ and /mā/ which dictates that students pronounce **mat, mass, mats; light, lice, lights; mate, mace, mates.**

The following is an example of how we might begin presenting and working with the sets. We usually begin by teaching three or four phonemes with their color cards. For example, /t/, /s/ and /ch/ are useful sounds for Southeast Asians to begin with because they can be used to end a number of word sets.

Day 1 /t/ /s/ /ch/

mat, mass, match
eight, ace, H

Express to the students that they need not repeat, but simply listen. Pronounce the words in the first set naturally, single out the final phonemes, hold up the corresponding colored cards and tape them to the blackboard several feet from each other. Pronounce the second set, again pointing out the final phoneme and the card. Have the students point to the correct cards as you pronounce words from the sets.

Day 2 /d/ /sh/

Review Day 1's sets and add these two new phonemes to the previous sets, which are now:

mat, mass, match, mad, mash
eight, ace, H, aid, /āsh/

(Some teachers do not like to use nonsense words, such as the final one in the above list. Our friend who introduced us to the idea of minimal sets suggested capitalizing nonsense words and making them proper names.) Also add two more sets:

bat, bass, batch, bad, bash
mutt, muss, much, mud, mush

Again, the students listen and point. They do not need to speak. The purpose is to make them aware of the sounds and to emphasize and develop listening skills.

Day 3 /k/ /j/

After reviewing the previous phonemes and lists (teacher pronouncing, students pointing), introduce the two new phonemes. Students now have the following lists:

mat, mass, match, mad, mash, Mack, Madge
eight, ace, H, aid, āsh, ache, age
bat, bass, batch, bad, bash, back, badge
mutt, muss, much, mud, mush, muck, /m'əj/

Also introduce two new sets:

> but, bus, bud, buck, budge
> lot, loss, laud, lock, lodge (and the nonsense words, if you like)
>
> (Note: some English-speakers don't distinguish between the /ä/ - /ô/, cot-caught sounds as keenly as others; some teachers might distinguish between some of the vowels in the above list.)

Day 4 0 (null set)

The null set, or no consonant, contrasts with other sets introduced so far because no consonant sound is heard or pronounced at the end of the word, as in **buy** and **A**. This is important for Southeast Asians who often do not pronounce final consonants in English: **rice** becomes /rī/, **much** becomes /mə̆/, **is** becomes /i/. Add the following new set:

> bite, bide, bike, buy (and any nonsense words you choose)

You now have the following sets to practice with:

> mat, mass, match, mad, mash, Mack, Madge, /Mae/
>
> eight, ace, H, aid, /āsh/, ache, age, A
>
> bat, bass, batch, bad, bash, back, badge, /ba/
>
> mutt, muss, much, mud, mush, muck, /mə̆/, /mə̆/
>
> but, bus, /bə̆ch/, bud, /bə̆sh/, buck, budge, /bə̆/
>
> lot, loss, /läch/, laud, /läsh/, lock, lodge, law

We continue building phoneme color card recognition and adding or reviewing minimal sets in this manner. Eventually, we begin having students who want to attempt pronunciation say words we dictate via stem and card, as described earlier: 1: the teacher says a stem, e.g., /ma/ and a student pronounces **mat, mass, match, mad,** etc. as dictated by the teacher (or another student) who is pointing to color cards, or 2: a student pronounces a word and either points to the card him/herself (the teacher or other students approve or correct the student) or has the teacher point to the card (the student sees if s/he pronounced the word correctly.

Another way we use the cards is for corrections. During those segments of ESL lessons when we are correcting pronunciation (which is during grammar and pronunciation sessions or when a student asks for pronunciation help, not during communication segments), we need only point to a card to instruct a student how to correct his/her pronunciation. Often, we only begin to turn towards the cards on the blackboard and the student will make the necessary correction! Students often ask for corrections by referring to the cards, too.

For students who are learning English reading and writing in their ESL class, the cards can again be used to reinforce correct pronunciation while focusing on the written word. Having learned the phonemes /s/, /m/, /t/, /d/, /v/, and /k/ (in sets) and dialogs for introducing oneself to another person, the students in one class worked in small groups to complete this worksheet.

> Hi, my na__ is _____ . What'__ your name?
>
>
> My name is John. Ni_____ to mee__ you, _____ .
>
> Gla__ to meet you too, John. Do you li____ in Chel__ea?
>
>
> No, I don'__ , bu__ I wor__ in Chelsea a__ nigh__ .

Next to each phoneme card on the blackboard was a number, and the students completed the worksheet by writing the number of the correct sound on the blank in the dialog. We then corrected it orally. This kind of exercise relates the words used in class to the pronunciation lessons and also helps students practice the words in whole, meaningful sentences. An example of this kind of exercise in narrative form, adapted from *Write Away Bk. 1*, appears at the end of this article.

The students in our classes greatly appreciate our regular 10-15 minute focus on pronunciation. Some have said they had not received pronunciation instruction elsewhere, and some have even asked to stay back in the level in order to continue their pronunciation improvement. Shy students are unafraid to show what they know by pointing out sounds they hear; students with severe pronunciation problems are easier to correct with visual cards they have already associated with a

phoneme. One Vietnamese woman who works in a Chinese restaurant said that when she had asked a customer, "Wha ki of fry ri?" she had felt quite intimidated by the customer's questioning of what she had asked. She actually blamed the customer for not using her imagination and the contextual cues. But when showed, using the cards, what she had said and what the customer had needed to hear, she readily grasped why she had been having trouble being understood.

The following is a list of sets that we have made. For more information on pronunciation sets and pronunciation problems of Southeast Asians, see Appendices 7, 8 and 10 in *Opening Lines*, published by The Experiment in International Living, Brattleboro, VT 05301 and *English Pronunciation Lessons: A Teacher's Resource Manual*, possibly available from the Center for Applied Linguistics.

1. mat mass mad mag map man ma'am Madge mash match Mack
2. cat Cass Cad cap can cash catch cats cast casts
3. but bus Bud bug bun bum budge buck bucks buts bust buzz buds(z) buzzed
4. cup cuff cuss cups cuffs cub cubs cut cud come cuts cussed (t) cupped (t) cuffed (t)
5. back bass bad bag ban bam badge bash batch back bat backs bask basked (t) bags bagged (d) basks backed
6. two Sue zoo you Jew through true chew shoe do goo coo
7. lock rock lot loss log lop lob locks rocks lots logs lobs
8. lamb ram lambs rams lamp ramp lamps ramps
9. A eight ace age ale air aim aid ache eights H A's (z)
10. lye rey lice light right lights rights ride rides(z) lied like likes life Lyle liar lime line (z)
11. how Haut house house (z) Haut's howl Houk Houk's how're
12. I I'm I've I'd Ike ire Ike's ice eyes
13. Fay fate face phase (z) fade lake fail fame fair fates faced fades (z) fakes phased
14. lay late lace laid lake lair lame lane laced (t) lakes
15. way wade wait wake wage wail wave whale wear ways (z) wakes Wayne Waynes wades waits waged waved weighed
16. pea Pete peas (z) peace peak peep peeve peel peer peach
17. sea seed seat seige seek seep seal seer seem seen seeks sees (z)
18. play played plate place plays plague plain player
19. who hoot whose (z) hoop
20. paw pawed pause posch (sh) pock Paul pawn pox
21. Sue sued suit Sue's (z) soup soon
22. boy Boyd boys (z) boil Boyer
23. may made mate mail mayor mace make maze maim makes
24. did dish ditch dig Dick dip dim din Dick's

"Exercise from *Write Away Bk. 1*"

> Hiep is a gardener. He is une__ploye__ now. He is looking for a __ob in a greenhou____ or on a far__. He is op__imi__ti__ tha__ he can fin__ a job. He is very __ualifie__ to wor__ as a gardener. His wor__ is very i__portan__ to hi__. He hope__ to fin__ a job soon.

Phonetic symbols used in this article are based on those used in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary.

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Author Biographies

Patricia A. Ryan and John Croes began their ESL careers in the early 1970's as Peace Corps volunteers in Thailand and Fiji. Both have masters degrees in teaching ESL from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, VT. Together they helped create the ESL program in Thailand's Refugee Processing Center in 1980-81 and later supervised teachers in the Philippine center in 1982-83. Ryan has taught ESL at Employment Connections, Inc. in Chelsea, MA, since 1984 and now also coordinates the ESL program. For the past three years, she has implemented the system of pronunciation development described in this article with both beginning and high intermediate levels of Southeast Asian, East European and Latin American students. Prior to his current position as the Vocational Counselor and Program Coordinator for the Vocational Remedial Education Program at Employment Connections, Croes worked as the ESL Resource Consultant at Boston's Adult Literacy Resource Institute for two years. His article, "Developing Listening Skills," appeared in the first volume of *Connections*.

A Structured Approach to Active Observing: Insights into Teaching and Learning

by Beth Sauerhaft

As part of my role training basic reading tutors I have found it important to develop a means to enable tutors to experience learning to read as an adult. In seeking to sensitize tutors to the issues of adult basic reading learners it was also critical to have tutors examine their own learning processes and styles.

I wanted to develop an exercise in which trainees would find themselves able to communicate orally but limited in their ability to read the symbols of their oral communication. Towards this goal I have developed an 'unorthodox' version of the Language Experience Approach (LEA). Using an unfamiliar written language to transcribe a group story created by trainees, trainees participated in the roles of learners of the story, observers of learners and observers of teaching. While my initial emphasis was on recreating the learning to read process, the observations and discussion among tutors in response to their roles in this exercise, led me to consider the possible usefulness of structuring these roles in the basic reading classroom. In this article I will discuss the exercise as I have developed it for tutor training, the observations and responses of trainees, and the possible usefulness of applying the roles in this exercise in the basic reading classroom.

Introduction To The Exercise

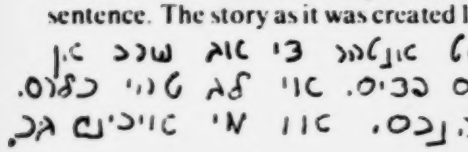
In this exercise I divide trainees into 3 groups: learners, observers of learning and observers of teaching. I then explain to the entire group that the purpose of this exercise is to begin to experience some of what it would be like to be learning to read as an adult and to develop an awareness of how we learn. I also indicate that the method I'm using is LEA and is one of many approaches used to teach reading. I explain that I will be teaching this method next week, but for now we are not to focus on learning the method, but rather to focus on the experiences we have. The learners are instructed that they will be learners of a brief story which they create in response to a photograph I will show the entire goup, and should pay attention to learning to read the story they create. Observers of learners are instructed to observe how they think learners learn to read the story. How might the learners be feeling in this exercise? What are they experiencing? Observers of the instructor (me) are asked to observe methods of teaching the text. What approaches help the learners to learn, what approaches hinder learning? I explain that LEA can be a good ice-breaker to help motivate students and offer some immediate success for the tutor and the learner.

The Exercise

Prompted by a photograph I display for the group, the learners are asked to generate 4 or 5 short sentences about the photograph. In this instance the photograph is a richly colorful illustration of Indian women in rice fields in India. There are no words on the photo. The learners are instructed to say anything in response to the picture, but are asked to be brief so as not to have to learn a lengthy text. As sentences are contributed I write down each sentence using the Hebrew alphabet---writing from right to left! Needless to say tutors are immediately shocked at the foreign symbols used to represent their own words. After seeing the first sentence written it becomes clear to the learners that this exercise may not be as easy as they thought.

Transcribing the hebrew alphabet into English enables the trainees to have the experience of seeing and learning to read unfamiliar symbols corresponding to their native language.

As I write down each of the sentences contributed by the trainees, I restate the prior sentence to build the momentum for the next person to contribute a sentence. The story as it was created looked like this:



The story transcribed said:

It's just another day of work in the rice paddies. I love the colors. Give thanks. Oh my aching back!

After I finish the story I ask the trainees if there are any additions or changes. There are none. I then read the story several times pointing to each word as I read. The learners then read the story aloud with me as I point. We do this several times. I ask if there are any words people want me to tell them. Using a marker to point to each word of the story I ask if anyone will come up and point and read the story. Hesitantly a volunteer offers to try. After she reads the story and points I suggest she pass the pointer to another volunteer. After 3 or 4 learners read the story with the group I work on teaching sentences and fragments out of sequence pointing to different parts. The exercise further develops as the group is asked to identify 4 or 5 words they would like to learn as 'sight words'. I then make a flashcard of each of the sight words chosen by the learners and review each card with the learners, moving my hand across the card in the direction of the language. Sight words are reviewed in and out of their contextual sequence. Individuals are given flashcards and are asked to match them with the words in the text. Learners are asked to lead the group in a review of the sight words. For the last part of the exercise I write 2 of the words a few times and ask the learners to try writing the words.

Observations And Discussion Following The Exercise

By the end of the approximately half hour exercise, learners were able to read their story and the sight words. After the exercise each of the 3 groups is asked to share their observations, particularly focusing on what enabled the learners to learn and what may have hindered learning.

The observations which follow constitute what I consider the real value of this exercise.

Observations Of Observers Of Learners

What made learning difficult for learners?

-unfamiliar alphabet
-direction of language (left to right rather than right to left)
-remembering their own words
-fear of being fools
-long words harder to learn
-not knowing how to write letters, where to begin

What helped learners to read?

-flashcards helped with symbol recognition
-learning by memorizing
-repetition

Observers of learners varied in their perceptions of the role of repetition. Some found the exercise too repetitive for the learners, others thought it was necessary to help the learners read the text.

Observers Of Teaching

What helped learners to read?

-prepared learners for activities
-clear instructions (a few thought instructions were too repetitive)
-progression of learning from easy to hard
-teacher took lesser role and gave more room for group participation
-teacher gave students choices, control over storymaking
-teaching sight words in the context of the text
-casual, low pressure environment

What hindered learning?

-teacher not clear enough about purpose of the exercise
-praise: some observers felt that I didn't praise learners enough, others felt that amount of praise was appropriate

Learners

What did they experience?

-too rote for some, for others repetition and rhythm were helpful
-pointing to each word really helped
-some needed more variety of teaching approaches (e.g. phonics)
-many felt scared

-moving my hand in the direction of the language helped
-some learners found clues in the symbols, for example ♪ = I love. This symbol '♪' looked like a musical note to one learner, another learner humorously associated it with a sperm. This letter '♪' looked like a sideways 'V'. Other letters reminded some learners of numbers. Whatever the association learners agreed that it helped learners to learn.

Tutor observations led to discussions about such things as:

-Do people who don't read words use symbols?
-What is reading anyway?
-How much praise do adult learners need?
-Different teaching techniques (sight words vs. phonics)
-different learning styles
-fear of learning
-the sequence of learning
-the importance of modeling
-the role of a teacher

The learning value in this exercise went way beyond learners learning to read the text, or establishing the usefulness of LEA as a teaching method, but rather was a group experience about learning how we learn.

A useful approach in tutor training, this exercise serves to:

-reinforce sensitivity among tutors to being an adult learning to read
-build tutor awareness of the variety of adult learning styles
-encourage tutors to question 'what is reading?' and the reading process
-motivate tutors to examine their assumptions about how we learn
-provide a context for a subsequent training session introducing LEA as an approach to tutoring

How Can This Exercise Be Useful In The Basic Reading Classroom?

For students of basic reading, learning to read is not an 'exercise' they experience in a workshop. Rather it is a time consuming, long process that goes through many stages. For tutors in this exercise, 'learning to read' is an experience which they actively participate in and have the opportunity to reflect upon.

While the populations differ in their stated objectives, learning to read vs. learning to teach reading, awareness of the variety of learning styles and insight into one's learning process are important for each population. I am suggesting that **the value of this exercise is rooted in the structure which allows students to become observers of learning and teaching.** To the extent that we are trying to encourage an exchange of roles between the learner and the knower, structuring a classroom to give students the opportunity to be observers of learning and teaching can encourage students to be more active participants in their own learning process. As a group exercise, this structure also encourages peer support and peer learning through observation and feedback. What is critical to this exercise is that it does not compromise the students' goals and expectations of learning to read, for well intended discussions about "how do you learn?". Rather learning about learning is built into the teaching method as a legitimate part of mastering a skill or content area and as such offers equal recognition and affirmation for student insights into their own learning and teaching needs.

For the purpose of the tutor training objectives, a form of LEA and an unfamiliar written language were used. However, I would suggest that teachers and students use their imaginations in applying this structure to different learning activities as well as in deciding at what point in the curriculum this structure can be integrated and in what group situations it would be approprate.

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Author Biography
Beth Sauerhaft is the Volunteer Program Coordinator at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute. Beth is currently tutoring in an Adult Basic Education classroom at the Jackson Mann Community School where she is discovering ways tutors can influence and support classroom dynamics. In addition Beth is a M.Ed. candidate at U.Mass/Boston.

Her previous work includes community legal education and advocacy in support of welfare recipients and pre-trial prisoners.

Writing Projects and Literacy: Report on an Experiment

by Denise Burden, Joseph Check and Peter Golden

I. Introduction

During the 1985-86 academic year the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) at Herbert Lehman College of City University of New York worked with one of California's leading job training programs, the Center for Employment Training (CET), on an innovative collaboration that crossed the boundaries between Adult Literacy Programs and Writing Projects. The goal of the collaboration was to train instructional personnel at all CET sites to integrate literacy instruction with job skills instruction. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation as one of its components, this experimental program attempted to adapt to the field of literacy the training techniques which the New York City and Boston Writing Projects use to train school teachers.

The program was planned and organized by CLS director Richard Sterling, project director Marcie Wolfe, CUNY faculty member Michael Holzman, and Judith Rodby of the University of Southern California. Their approach was to bring together, for an intensive two day planning session, a selected, 19-member group composed of Writing Project teachers, experienced ESL instructors, and community based literacy instructors. After a full day of whole-group planning and goal setting, the large group was divided into three-person teams called triads, and each triad began to design three and one half days of training for one of CET's sites. Because a high percentage of CET trainees are not native English speakers, each triad included at least one ESL instructor.

To understand the innovative aspects of this program, it is necessary to understand something about the Center for Employment Training. CET is the largest and most successful job training program in California and possibly in the country. Graduates enter many fields, including electronics technician, machine tool operator, precision sheet metal operator, custodian, and shipping receiving clerk. Eighty five percent of CET's graduates are placed and retained in their positions, a very high success rate for this type of program.

CET approaches job skills training in the context of the whole person, using a team approach. A typical team consists of the job skills instructor, an ESL Literacy instructor, and a motivation and support counselor. All CET programs are open entry open exit; trainees start at their own level and advance at their own rate.

Despite its success, CET felt its training procedures could be strengthened. Most CET trainees required instruction in basic reading and writing skills prior to and during their job-skills training. However, there was a lack of communication and common assumptions between the literacy instructors and job skills instructors. Typically, CET's literacy instructors are ESL teachers drawn from nearby colleges, while skills instructors have backgrounds in skilled trades or professions. CET wanted a training package that would bring the two types of instructors together around the common issue of job-related literacy training.

Boston Writing Project (BWP) Co-Directors Peter Golden and Denise Burden were among those selected from around the country to serve as curriculum designers and instructors. BWP Director Joseph Check served as a consultant at the two-day planning session, but did not do on-site work. Peter served as a training team member for two sites, Oxnard, California and San Jose,

California. Denise served as a training team member for the San Jose, California site.

Below they give some reflections and conclusions on their experiences.

II. Peter's Report

In talking with CET personnel I was surprised to find that skills trainers and ESL instructors not only had dichotomous views of their own role in the training of CET "clients," but that in many cases those roles were seen as being mutually exclusive. Some ESL and GED trainers, for example, firmly believed that the "skills" trainers should not attempt to include any explicit reading or writing activities in their classes. A few even felt that because few "skills" trainers had college degrees the whole workshop was shaky from the beginning. In addition, not many people had given thought to the role literacy plays in the trainees' lives. Indeed, "literacy" quite often was taken to mean those formal activities that lead to a decoding and encoding of the written word and that one's "literacy" was evaluated in a classroom setting.

As the Co-Director of a writing project I was not at all certain that my qualifications fit the task I was about to undertake. I was not a "skills" person; I did not teach electronics or microscope assembly or custodial practices. Neither was I trained in ESL or GED preparation. In short I could not offer myself as an expert to either the skills or the literacy factions.

What I did have, though, was a sound knowledge of how to teach writing in a variety of classroom situations and subject areas; I also possessed seven years of experience in teacher training. It was these two strengths that made it possible for me to go to California and help people who were experts in their own fields to look, in a focused manner, at some of the issues surrounding literacy. I knew that having them write out their burgeoning thoughts in a variety of outlets (from journals to letters to written dialogues) would force them to clarify their thinking on the subject and give them an agenda for dealing with literacy training at CET. I wanted them to experience the frustrations and joys of working through their own thinking by writing and responding in writing; I wanted to model the types of writing activities that could be adapted for any learning situation.

The overall goal of the CET Literacy and Learning Project was to institutionalize the integration of skills training and literacy education. The way to do this was to provide training seminars that would:

1. increase CET trainers' awareness of the role literacy plays in the CET trainees' lives;
2. assist CET trainers in creating literacy activities that respond to trainees' individual identities and needs;
3. aid CET trainers in infusing these activities throughout the skills training.

In planning the workshops my co-workers, two ESL teachers from USC, and I decided that we would encourage the use of journals throughout the four days. We would ask for specific responses to what had been demonstrated or discussed and we would also provide time for people to free write and explore their knowledge and feelings before we pursued topics. The periods immediately before lunch and again immediately before breaks and the end of the day became times for journal writing. In addition, participants were asked to write in their journals as part of individual presentations and other workshop activities. More importantly, we structured in times for sharing of ideas, thoughts, and reactions. Thus people were writing not just for themselves, although the journals were private, but also to create a storehouse of thoughts that could get a response; in short, we created multiple audiences for the writing.

Because we believed that some form of publication would be a unifying experience for the members, we announced that we would collect writing from participants at the end of the penultimate session. We then would staple and distribute the resultant booklet: instant publication. People could write something special for the booklet or could submit something else they had written previously. They could include as much writing as they wanted, but we did expect at least one piece from everyone. The journal therefore also became a mine of writing which participants could draw on.

After the group had investigated and discussed issues of literacy and how they affected all our lives in a wide variety of ways, it was time to demonstrate and model a lesson that used writing to learn. The subject area was radiocarbon dating, a scientific concept unrelated to anything the participants did on a daily basis. We wanted to present them with material that was as difficult and unfamiliar to them as much of their own material is to their trainees. They brainstormed their impressions of the subject matter, raising questions and developing avenues of inquiry. They then read an article and individually,

without referring to it, wrote down all that they could recall about it.

Individual participants read their writing aloud, some recalling details that others didn't, building up and reinforcing whatever concepts arose. Small groups were then created and directed to develop a group statement, once again without referring to the article. The individuals in the group would help each other, from strong memory to weak, from general principles to specific details. When all group statements had been read it was time to begin the scientific lesson. Only then the teacher and "students" would have a good grasp on what was known and unknown, what could be assumed and what had to be clarified, the "students" were better able to ask questions and the "teacher" had a focus for instruction. The purpose of the writing had been to learn the material and to provide an entry into the reading.

This proved very successful and almost everyone could see an adaptation to their subject area. They also began to make connections between literacy activities and "skill" training in general. It was these connections and implementations that took up the third day's training. The fourth day was a half day and was taken up by reflection and resolutions. The participants had seen several elements in the workshops that were useful not only to their trainees but also to themselves and their situation within CET. They resolved therefore to carry on the types of inquiry and communication that had characterized those four days and make them a continuing self-appraisal of their own sites and of CET in general.

Denise's Report

Similar to Peter's initial expressed doubt, I too felt a bit uncertain as to whether my expertise and experience could apply to the CET situation. However, after the two-day team planning meeting I felt relieved and much more confident about the training we were to do. The two women I worked with were not writing project staff people. One is an ESL reading specialist on faculty at a university on the west coast. The other is a staff member at a public library literacy program in the Northeast. The three of us agreed that reading and writing would be at the core of everything we would do together with the CET staff. Activities like journal writing, brainstorming, writing to learn, small group and large group problem-solving strategies, and producing a publication were included in our plan.

Yet, a couple of issues still gnawed at my mind. First, the vast majority of CET staff and clientele were Spanish speaking Mexican-Americans. While I have had extensive experience with the Puerto Rican populations and other Hispanic groups in the Northeast, I had had no substantive contact with Mexican-Americans. Furthermore, during the planning meeting I realized that there were no Mexican-American consultants. Consequently, I was concerned about the cross-cultural elements that might or might not become factors during the seminars.

Secondly, I was anxious about working with "non-traditional" educators. As Co-Director of the Boston Writing Project much of my in-service training experience involves working with classroom teachers, support staff and school administrators. Would it be any different working with vocational skills instructors, support counselors and ESL literacy instructors? Just the fact that we did not address these professionals as teachers, but rather as trainers or instructors, raised my consciousness about some of the nuances of working in adult literacy programs as opposed to working in high schools or colleges.

Regardless of these differences, I wanted the CET staff to realize that my co-trainers and I were employing a methodology to improve the teaching of reading and writing that might be adapted for use in their specific skill area and job role. We felt that this could be best accomplished through the use of modeling activities; open, honest, directed discussions about literacy; and collaborative curriculum planning. What follows are brief descriptions of the types of activities used during the training.

The first day involved two major activities. During the morning the group formed triads to identify, brainstorm and discuss the elements of successful learning and teaching experiences. Individuals started with the self (e.g. "Recall, in writing, a time when you successfully learned something."), shared these experiences with members of the small group, and then listed what they thought were the critical components for successful learning and teaching. These lists were reported back to the large group at which time several staff members offered anecdotes of successful teaching experiences with their trainees. This initial activity allowed participants to feel affirmed about strategies that they were already using in the classroom and provided a forum for people to share such techniques with colleagues.

We, as trainers, wanted to build on these existing strengths.

The second activity consisted of the identification of the literacy needs of the CET trainees. Again, we began by looking at the self. The group brainstormed lists containing: a) what they had read over the past several weeks; b) what they had written; c) what they thought their trainees had written. This activity allowed the staff to become more aware of the range of reading and writing possibilities in their professional and personal lives as well as in the lives of their trainees. Furthermore, participants began discussing ways of integrating real life reading and writing experiences into the curriculum. Discussion also included issues like the purpose for writing in relation to the brainstormed list, audience for the writing, and motivation. The day ended with a discussion about reconceptualizing the meaning of literacy for CET. Journals had been introduced in the first part of the day. Trainers provided CET staff with notebooks and participants were encouraged to make entries at any time during the seminar, particularly as the first and last activity of each day. The journals, which remained private, provided a place for people to record new learnings, to embellish re-learnings, and to enter reflective thoughts.

A focused discussion recapitulating the various teaching techniques used during the first day was the opening activity the following day. Almost everyone could see adaption of several of these strategies to their particular area. However, several participants wanted to use this time to voice their concerns, opinions and reactions to, as it were, CET institutional issues and curriculum parameters. This became a pivotal point during the seminars in that these internal issues had to be addressed if the collaborative curriculum planning and training itself were to be truly meaningful. The CET Administrative Director was in our group at this time, thus providing the necessary information and institutional vision to help us through this process.

Issues like instructor/trainee expectations, CET goals and objectives, and cross disciplinary articulation were all raised during this portion of the day. An ESL instructor raised a question concerning language appropriateness and the role of bilingualism when improving trainee reading and writing skills. It was very easy for me to identify with and share my experiences concerning a similar issue, the Black English language and its implications for a teacher responding to such student writers. In response the group shared problems, observations and solutions including looking at the "whole" person, at the process of learning, at the need to master the English language, and at the importance of the teacher in fostering positive self-esteem.

Additional reading and writing techniques were demonstrated throughout the rest of the day and during the following morning (e.g. pre-writing, pre-reading strategies, a writing to learn activity, continued journal entries, etc.). The critical part of the training was not realized until participants met in skills groups to apply these literacy strategies in a systematic way. Almost all of the participants decided to use journals in some capacity—both to record their own professional teaching experiences as well as to have their trainees use them for various reasons. Many considered establishing a small lending library for trainees and colleagues in their work space—to include both academic and non-academic material. Most participants at this site wanted to establish a newsletter by and about the trainees. Several other techniques used during the training were also integrated into the instructors' teaching repertoire. Finally, the participants met in issue groups to further discuss, rethink, and collaborate with others on the internal issues that were raised as well as to revamp literacy approaches in a cross-disciplinary context.

The culminating publication activity was a tremendous success. By the end of the seminars participants really cared about the quality of their writing and the writing of their peers. Several participants stayed late at the end of the second and third days of training to serve as peer editors or request feedback from one of the co-trainers. The sense of audience beyond our group (i.e. other personnel, families, etc.) heightened the concern for high quality.

Conclusions

Denise's initial queries concerning the role of Writing Projects and non-traditional educators were answered positively. Her concerns regarding cross-cultural effects on the seminars produced a sensitivity which had a positive impact. The cross-cultural elements were acknowledged and carefully handled during the discussion concerning the role of bilingualism in literacy skills training. The CET staff left the comprehensive 3½-day seminar with 1) a common framework and philosophy of literacy for their workplace; 2) specific reading and writing strategies that they could use in their classroom the next day; and 3) a rekindled spirit of collaboration and rededication to CET goals.

For Peter too, the sessions proved that elements of training programs initially designed to assist teachers of writing can be easily adapted to other areas. These elements include the use of journals, modeling activities, the use of writing to learn and, through publication, the creation of a community of learner/writers. This last is what probably had the most profound effect. For an organization devoted to responding to those people in most need of assistance the strategy of bonding them together in literacy activities has the most potential for personal and professional growth.

In conclusion, we all feel the major goals of this phase of the CLS/CET Project had been met. In the process we learned, as Writing Project staff members, that there is a high degree of agreement between reading-writing activities that work in in-school situations and in job-training situations. The commonalities, as they revealed themselves in the experimental effort, seem to cluster around three key principles: 1) Reading and Writing are not activities separate from learners' day to day lives nor the day to day lives of their teachers; 2) Reading and Writing are not activities that exist solely in the Reading English, ESL or GED class, rather they are tools that can be used and encouraged to explore a wide variety and amount of learning directly related to any "skill" or subject; 3) Whatever literacy activities go on in the disciplines or job skills areas reinforces and revalidates those taught in the "academic" areas (ESL, GED, etc.).

In addition, in this program CET instructors had experienced the process whereby these principles were transformed into actual practice. By participating in and then creating literacy activites directly related to their own training programs they had created a solid foundation upon which further applications would be based. This further training, in the form of an ambitious follow-up program, is currently being carried out by CLS staff members.

BWP Project Description

The Boston Writing Project (BWP), part of the Institute for Learning and Teaching at the University of Massachusetts/Boston, offers teachers a wide variety of opportunities to become better teachers of writing. In all of its programs teachers write; examine the writing processes used by themselves, their colleagues, and their students; study current research, theory, and practice in the teaching of writing; and approach the teaching of writing in a cross-disciplinary context.

Since its beginning in the summer of 1979, BWP has conducted annual summer institutes and provided school-year programs, including in-service workshop series, for a wide variety of urban and suburban school systems. To date BWP has trained teachers from more than 35 communities in Massachusetts. The project also works with faculty from the state's two and four year colleges and has assisted in faculty development efforts at UMass/Boston.

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Author Biographies

Denise Burden is Co-director and Curriculum Specialist for the Boston Writing Project. She has served as a resource specialist in the Brookline school system for grades K-12 and has taught in the Boston Public Schools at the middle school level.

Joseph Check, Director of the Boston Writing Project, focuses his professional attention on the teaching of writing. He is a member of the National Advisory Board of the National Writing Project and a member of the Steering Committee of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute.

Peter Golden is Co-director and In-service Co-ordinator for the Boston Writing Project. He has taught secondary English in the Boston Public Schools and writes a monthly column on writing and curriculum for the Boston Union Teacher.